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MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME IV.—PART I.
AFTER PENTECOST
(XI. TO XVIII. SUNDAY)

Edited by Rev. J. B. Coyle, C.SS.R.

VISITS TO THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT and TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, with Prayers for Mass, Preparation for Communion, Thanksgiving, etc, By ST. ALPHONSUS. From 2/6 to 5/-.

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Meditations and Readings

FOR

EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

Selected from the Spiritual Writings of

SAINT ALPHONSUS

Doctor of the Church and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer

VOLUME FOUR
PART I.

FOREWORD
BY
HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CASHEL

Edited by

JOHN BAPT. COYLE, C.SS.R.

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FOREWORD

By His Grace The Archbishop of Cashel

I welcome with special pleasure "Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year." These beautiful volumes provide the clergy and laity with salutary illustrations and inspirations. Immersed in affairs of the world we are in danger of forgetting the things that really matter. The lure of excessive amusement and the attractions of morbid literature create an unhealthy atmosphere. Our minds are turned away from heavenly thoughts and are coloured by the evil influences that surround us. In these "Meditations and Readings" we have the means of filling our minds with holy thoughts and our wills with fruitful resolutions that will enable us to live in a world of supernatural ideals.

The "Meditations and Readings" are selected from the spiritual writings of St. Alphonsus, Doctor of the Church, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. In St. Alphonsus we have a guide whose spiritual outlook on life, wonderful gift of sane advice, and unquestioned supremacy in the sacred science are a guarantee of religious perfection. His writings have been models of spiritual instruction and have won many souls to the life of grace. Their publication in new form deserves high praise.

The "Meditations and Readings" are edited by Fr. Coyle, C.SS.R., whose experience as a missioner has given him an insight into the needs of the day, and whose experience as an editor has fitted him for the

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loving task of publishing the Works of the great Founder of his great Congregation.

I bless Fr. Coyle and his work. I hope that his "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS" will be widely known and properly appreciated. We are indebted to him for volumes that cannot fail to help us in the important and difficult task of saving our souls.

✠ J. M. HARTY.
Archbishop of Cashel.

Feast of the Blessed Oliver Plunket,
11th July, 1930.

LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE TO THE EDITOR.

ARA COELI,
ARMAGH,
16th March, 1924.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I have put off writing to thank you for your interesting and edifying volume, *Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year*, till I should find time to look through it. I have done so now, and I can congratulate you on undertaking a very useful work; and I hope you will be spared till you complete it.

The Ascetic Works of St. Alphonsus have done wonders in conveying solid instruction, nourishing piety, and exciting fervour among the people in every state and stage of life. They have been an ever enduring source of piety, especially in inspiring love of our Holy Redeemer and tender devotion to His Blessed Mother. It is a question whether his great Theological Works have contributed more to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Hence it was not without regret I noticed that these Spiritual Works were not so common among the people as they were in my early days. They seemed to be giving place to more showy and more superficial modern works which are far from breathing the fervent spirit of the great Doctor and Saint. One of the chief fruits which I expect from the work you have undertaken is the redress of this serious spiritual loss.

You have commenced well, and I trust you will be

able to continue till the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus are again as extensively circulated among the people as they were in the past. The scheme you have sketched out for yourself will familiarize the people with the beauty and fervour of St. Alphonsus' Works, and from using your volumes for casual reading they will be likely to drink more deeply of the source of fervour the Saint has opened up to them.

Wishing you every blessing and success in your useful work,

I am,

Dear Father Coyle,

Yours gratefully,

✠ MICHAEL CARDINAL LOGUE.

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL O'DONNELL wrote:

It is a pleasure to me to subscribe my name to the beautiful letter written by my lamented predecessor, his Eminence Cardinal Logue, to commend Father Coyle's publications from the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL O'DONNELL,
Archbishop of Armagh.

Armagh, 20th February, 1926.

AS FOREWORD TO VOLUME III. PART II. HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM wrote :—

As a boy I read with great profit the popular spiritual works of St. Alphonsus Liguori. I am delighted to know that Fr. Coyle is having them republished in an enlarged edition and in the new form of " Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year."

I do not know of any religious books at once so sane, so spiritual and so adapted to the intelligence of the ordinary reader. They go straight to the root of normal spirituality. They are commonsense founded on the Truths of Faith. Such books were never so much needed as at the present day. We are living in an age of secularism. Never before did life offer so many attractions to divert the mind from the consideration of the Eternal Truths. Never before was there such an output of purely secular books, magazines, and newspapers, so smoothly written and so beautifully illustrated that the temptation to read them is universal and almost irresistible. Some of them are mere covers for sensuality, and others are hostile to the Faith, and all have a despiritualising influence on the mind. To counteract the resulting influence we want a corresponding output of wholesome Catholic literature, including books that advertise the attractions of the spiritual life. We want books that will bring home to our youth that there is no happiness comparable to the humble joy of the good

Christian. We want books that will, with flashes from the Beyond, dissipate the spell that the prospect of sensual pleasure casts over the imagination of youth. We want books, too, that will terrorise the hardened sinner and confirm the struggling aspirant to the higher life in the grim determination to walk in the narrow way. Now such are the ascetic works of St. Liguori that Father Coyle is engaged in having re-published. From my heart I wish him success in this apostolic mission. From my heart I pray that these volumes may have a wide circulation.

It is recognised that St. Liguori was one of the greatest missioners of all time. He was himself a great preacher of the Gospel. He founded the Congregation of the Redemptorists who have been in the thick of the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil for well-nigh two hundred years, and who are only growing more vigorous with time. The Saint was a classical writer of Moral Theology. And while his Moral Theology holds the scales evenly between laxity and rigorism, his spiritual writings hold the scales between sentimental piety and cold ascetical teaching, with a like evenness, which attracts and converts the sinner, encourages the weak, and confirms the strong.

✠ T. P. GILMARTIN,
Archbishop of Tuam.

St. Jarlath's,
28*th April*, 1929.

LETTER OF APPROBATION AND BLESSING FROM MOST REV. PATRICK MURRAY, C.SS.R.,
Superior-General and Rector Major

J.M.J.A.T. Sant' Alfonso—Via Merulana,
Roma,
23rd October, 1923.

My Dear Father Coyle,

I am very glad to hear that you have the first part of your "Meditations and Readings for every Day of the Year from the Writings of St. Alphonsus" ready for publication, and I wish this and the succeeding Volumes every success. It is difficult to exaggerate the value of these "Meditations and Readings" as is seen from the following statements of two Popes :

His Holiness Pope Pius IX, in speaking of the writings of St. Alphonsus, wrote : "The works of this most holy and learned man, written with extraordinary tender piety and devotion, breathe in every page a great love for Jesus Christ and great confidence in His mercy and merits. They also inspire their readers with the most ardent devotion to the Virgin Mother of God and to the Saints, and they inflame the hearts of men with the desire of receiving the Sacraments, as well as furnish a most abundant supply of excellent admonitions, counsels and directions to those who labour for the salvation of souls."

Pope Benedict XV also wrote recently, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Doctorate of St. Alphonsus, that the excellence and utility of his teaching are becoming every day more apparent, and that his writings are helpful, not only to Theologians and Professors of the

Sacred Sciences, but also to the faithful of every condition of life, to whom he points out the way to solid virtue, and smoothes for them the way to the highest Christian perfection. His Holiness adds that the Saint's one great ambition in all his writings was to make known to all men the infinite amiability of Jesus Christ.

It is unnecessary for me to add anything to these words of two Popes. I wish only to say that this infinite amiability of Jesus Christ is particularly well shown in the present volume, for, in addition to the Meditations and Readings on the Religious State and on other subjects, there are given about forty Meditations on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, in which are contained some of the most beautiful and devotional pages written by the Saint. Moreover the division of the ascetic writings of the Saint into two Meditations and a Spiritual Reading for every day of the year, and this arranged in such a way as not to interrupt the sequence of any work of the Saint, will please many, both in the Cloister and in the world, who desire to know and follow in their spiritual life the teachings of this great Doctor of the Church and Director of Souls.

In conclusion, in the name of St. Alphonsus I bless you and these Meditations and Readings with the hope that they may be everywhere known and read and well thought on, so that all may know the infinite amiability and mercy of Jesus Christ and the unspeakable amiability and mercy of His Blessed Mother, and that they may thus seek and love and serve Them alone.

Your devoted servant and confrère,

PATRICK MURRAY, C.SS.R.,
Sup. Gen. and Rector Major.

Rev. J. B. Coyle, C.SS.R.,
St. Joseph's,
Dundalk.

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MEDITATIONS AND READINGS

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

I. —THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD.

Let us consider how holy Mary passed from this world by a sweet and happy death. Three things render death bitter—attachment to the world, remorse for sins, and the uncertainty of salvation. Mary died as she had lived, entirely detached from the things of the world; she died in the most perfect peace; she died in the certainty of eternal glory.

1.

Death being the punishment of sin, it would seem that the Divine Mother—all holy, and exempt as she was from its slightest stain—should also have been exempt from death, and from encountering the misfortunes to which the children of Adam, infected by the poison of sin, are subject. But God was pleased that Mary should in all things resemble Jesus; and as the Son died, it was becoming that the Mother should also die; because, moreover, He wished to give the just an example of the precious death prepared for them, He willed that even

* A Novena of Meditations and Readings for the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary begins here.

the most Blessed Virgin should die, but by a sweet and happy death. Let us, therefore, consider how precious was Mary's death, on account of the special favours by which it was accompanied.

There are three things that render death bitter: attachment to the world, remorse for sins, and the uncertainty of salvation. The death of Mary was entirely free from these causes of bitterness, and was accompanied by three special graces, which rendered it precious and joyful. She died as she had lived, entirely detached from the things of the world; she died in the most perfect peace; she died in the certainty of eternal glory.

There can be no doubt that attachment to earthly things renders the death of the worldly bitter and miserable, as the Holy Ghost says: *O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!*—(Ecclus. xli. 1). But because the Saints die detached from the things of the world, their death is not bitter, but sweet, lovely, and precious; that is to say, as St. Bernard remarks, worth purchasing at any price, however great. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*—(Apoc. xiv. 13). Who are they who, being already dead, die? They are those happy souls who pass into eternity already detached, and, so to say, dead to all affection for terrestrial things; and who, like St. Francis of Assisi, find in God alone all their happiness, and with him can say: "My God and my All!"

II.

What soul was ever more detached from earthly goods, and more united to God, than the beautiful soul of Mary? She was detached from her parents, for at the age of three years, when children are most attached to them, and stand in the greatest need of their assistance, Mary, with the greatest intrepidity, left them, and went to shut herself up in the Temple to attend to God alone. She was detached from riches, contenting herself always to live poor, and supporting herself with the labour of her own hands. She was detached from honours, loving

an humble and abject life, though the honours due to a queen were hers, as she was descended from the kings of Israel. The Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Elizabeth of Hungary that when her parents left her in the temple, she resolved in her heart to have no father, and to love no other good than God.

St. John saw Mary represented in that woman, clothed with the sun, who held the moon under her feet. *And a great sign appeared in heaven : a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet*—(Apoc. xii. 1). Interpreters explain the moon to signify the goods of this world, which, like the moon, are uncertain and changeable. Mary never had these goods in her heart, but always despised them and trampled them under her feet; living in this world as a solitary turtle-dove in a desert, never allowing her affection to centre itself on any earthly thing; so that of her it was said : *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land*—(Cant. ii. 12). And elsewhere : *Who is she that goeth up by the desert?*—(Cant. iii. 6). Whence the Abbot Rupert says " Thus didst thou go up by the desert; that is, having a solitary soul." Mary, then, having lived always and in all things detached from the earth, and united to God alone, death was not bitter, but, on the contrary, very sweet and dear to her; since it united her more closely to God in Heaven, by an eternal bond.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE.

I.—THE PROMPTITUDE OF MARY IN ASSISTING THOSE WHO INVOKE HER.

Truly unfortunate are we poor children of Eve; for, guilty before God of her fault, and condemned to the same penalty, we have to wander about in this valley of

tears as exiles from our country, and to weep over our many afflictions of body and soul. But blessed is he who, in the midst of these sorrows, often turns to the comfortress of the world, to the refuge of the unfortunate, to the great Mother of God, and devoutly calls upon her and invokes her! *Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates* —(Prov. viii. 34). Blessed, says Mary, is he who listens to my counsels, and watches continually at the gate of my mercy, and invokes my intercession and aid.

The holy Church carefully teaches us her children with what attention and confidence we should unceasingly have recourse to this loving protectress; and for this purpose commands a worship peculiar to Mary. And not only this, but she has instituted many Festivals that are celebrated throughout the year in honour of this great Queen: she devotes one day in the week, in an especial manner, to her honour: in the Divine Office all Ecclesiastics and Religious are daily obliged to invoke her in the name of all Christians; and, finally, she desires that all the faithful should salute this most holy Mother of God three times a day, at the sound of the Angelus-bell. And that we may understand the confidence that the holy Church has in Mary we need only remember that in all public calamities she invariably invites all to have recourse to the protection of this Divine Mother, by novenas, prayers, processions, by visiting the churches dedicated to her honour, and her images. And this is what Mary desires. She wishes us always to seek her and invoke her aid; not as if she were begging of us these honours and marks of veneration, for they are in no way proportioned to her merits but she desires them, that by such means our confidence and devotion may be increased, and that so she may be able to give us greater succour and comfort. "She seeks for those," says St. Bonaventure, "who approach her devoutly and with reverence, for such she loves, nourishes, and adopts as her children."

The Saint remarks that Ruth, whose name signifies "seeing and hastening," was a figure of Mary; "for

Mary, seeing our miseries, hastens in her mercy to succour us." Novarino adds that "Mary, in the greatness of her desire to help us, cannot admit of delay, for she is in no way an avaricious guardian of the graces she has at her disposal as Mother of Mercy, and cannot do otherwise than immediately shower down the treasures of her liberality on her servants."

Oh, how prompt is this good Mother to help those who call upon her! *Thy two breasts*, says the sacred Canticle, *are like two roes that are twins*—(Cant. iv. 5). Richard of St. Laurence explains this verse, and says, that as roes are swift in their course, so are the breasts of Mary prompt to bestow the milk of mercy on all who ask it. "By the light pressure of a devout salutation and prayer they distil large drops." The same author assures us that the compassion of Mary is poured out on every one who asks it, even should it be sought for by no other prayer than a simple "Hail Mary." Wherefore Novarino declares that the Blessed Virgin not only runs but flies to assist him who invokes her. "She," says this author, "in the exercise of her mercy, knows not how to act differently from God; for, as He flies at once to the assistance of those who beg His aid, faithful to His promise, *Ask, and you shall receive*—(John xvi. 24), so Mary, whenever she is invoked, is at once ready to assist him who prays to her. "God has wings when He assists His own, and immediately flies to them; Mary also takes wing when she is about to fly to our aid." And hence we see who the woman was, spoken of in the following verse of the Apocalypse, to whom two great eagle's wings were given, that she might fly to the desert. *And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert* —(Apoc. xii. 14). Ribeira explains these wings to mean the love with which Mary always flew to God. "She has the wings of an eagle, for she flies with the love of God." But the Blessed Amadeus, more to our purpose, remarks that these wings of an eagle signify "the velocity, exceeding that of the seraphim, with which Mary always flies to the succour of her children."

This will explain a passage in the Gospel of St. Luke, in which we are told that when Mary went to visit and shower graces on St. Elizabeth and her whole family, she was not slow, but went with speed. The Gospel says : *And Mary, rising up, went into the hill country with haste*—(Luke i. 39). And this is not said of her return. For a similar reason, we are told in the sacred Canticles that *her hands are skilful at the wheel*—(Cant. v. 14), meaning, says Richard of St. Laurence, " that as the art of turning is the easiest and most expeditious mode of working, so also is Mary the most willing and prompt of all the Saints to assist her clients." And truly " she has the most ardent desire to console all, and is no sooner invoked than accepts our prayers and helps us." St. Bonaventure, then, was right in calling Mary the " salvation of all who call upon her," meaning, that it suffices to invoke this Divine Mother in order to be saved; for, according to Richard of St. Laurence, she is always ready to help those who seek her aid. " Thou wilt always find her ready to help thee." And Bernardine de Bustis adds that " this great lady is more desirous to grant us graces than we are desirous to receive them."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The Prophet David predicted many circumstances, and in great detail, respecting the Passion of Jesus Christ. Especially in the twenty-first Psalm he foretold that Jesus would be pierced with nails in His hands and in His feet, and that they would be able to count all His bones. He foretold that before He should be crucified, His garments would be stripped from Him and divided

among the executioners. He spoke of His outer garments, because the inner vestment, which was made without seam, was to be given by lot : *They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots*—(Ps. xxi. 19). This Prophecy is recalled both by St. Matthew and St. John—(Matt. xxvii. 35; Jo. xix. 23).

David also foretold what St. Matthew relates respecting the blasphemies and mockeries of the Jews against Jesus Christ while He hung upon the Cross : *They that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads and saying, Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self; if thou be the son of God, come down from the cross. In like manner also, the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking, said : He saved others, himself he cannot save; if he be the king of Israel, let him come now down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him now deliver him if he will have him; for he said : I am the Son of God*—(Matt. xxvii. 39-43). All this was in accordance with what David had foretold : *All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn; they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let him deliver him, let him save him seeing he delighteth in him*—(Ps. xxi. 8, 9).

II.

The Royal Prophet further foretold the great pains Jesus would suffer on the Cross in seeing Himself abandoned by all, and even by His own, except St. John and the Blessed Virgin; while His beloved Mother, by her presence, would not lessen the sufferings of her Son, but rather increased them through the compassion He felt for her, in seeing her thus afflicted by His death. Thus our suffering Lord, in the agonies of His bitter death, had none to comfort Him. This also was foretold by David : *I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none*—(Ps. lxviii. 21). The greatest

suffering, however, of our afflicted Redeemer consisted in His beholding Himself abandoned by His Eternal Father, upon which He cried out, according to the prophecy of David: *O God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me? Far from my salvation are the words of my sins*—(Ps. xxi. 2), as though He had said, "O my Father, the sins of men, which I call My own, because I have taken them upon Me, forbid Me to be delivered from these sufferings which are ending My life; and why hast Thou, O My God, abandoned Me in this My great agony?" To these words of David correspond the words which St. Matthew records as uttered by Jesus upon the Cross a little while before His death: *Eli, Eli, lamma sabachthani? that is: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*—(Matt. xxvii. 46).

Monday—Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

II.—THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD.

Peace of mind renders the death of the just precious. Sins committed during life are the worms that so cruelly torment and gnaw at the hearts of poor dying sinners. But holy Mary could not be tormented at death by any remorse for she was always pure, and free from the least stain of sin. *Thou art fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.*

I.

Peace of mind renders the death of the just precious. Sins committed during life are the worms that so cruelly torment and gnaw the hearts of poor dying sinners, who, about to appear before the Divine tribunal, see themselves at that moment surrounded by their sins, which terrify them, and cry out, according to St. Bernard: "We are thy works; we will not abandon thee!" Mary certainly could not be tormented at death by any remorse of conscience, for she was always pure, and always free from the least shade of actual or original sin; so much so, that of her it was said: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee*—(Cant. iv. 7). From the moment that she had the use of reason, that is, from the first moment of her Immaculate Conception in the womb of St. Anne, she began to love God with all her strength, and continued to do so, always advancing more and more throughout her whole life in love and perfection. And all her thoughts, desires, and affections were of and for God alone; she never uttered a word, made a movement, cast a glance, or breathed, but for God and His glory; and never departed a step or detached herself for a single moment from Divine love. Ah, how did all the lovely virtues that she had practised during life surround her blessed bed in the happy hour of her death! That Faith so constant; that loving confidence in God; that unconquerable patience in the midst of so many sufferings; that humility in the midst of so many privileges; that modesty; that meekness; that tender compassion for souls; that insatiable zeal for the glory of God; and, above all, that most perfect love towards Him, with that entire conformity to the Divine will: all, in a word, surrounded her, and consoling her, said: "We are thy works; we will not abandon thee!" Our Lady and Mother, we are all daughters of thy beautiful heart; now that thou art leaving this miserable life, we will not leave thee; we also will go, and be thy eternal accompaniment and honour in Paradise, where, by our means, thou wilt reign as Queen of all men and of all Angels.

II.

The certainty of eternal salvation renders death sweet. Death is called a passage; for by death we pass from a short to an eternal life. And as the dread of those is indeed great who die in doubt of their salvation, and who approach the solemn moment with well-grounded fear of passing into eternal death; thus, on the other hand, the joy of the Saints is indeed great at the close of life, hoping with some security to go and possess God in Heaven. A nun of the Order of St. Teresa, when the doctor announced to her her approaching death, was so filled with joy that she exclaimed: "Oh, how is it, sir, that you announce to me such welcome news, and demand no fee?" St. Laurence Justinian, being at the point of death, and perceiving his servants weeping round him, said: "Away, away with your tears; this is no time to mourn." Go elsewhere to weep; if you would remain with me, rejoice, as I rejoice, in seeing the gates of Heaven open to me, that I may be united to my God. Thus also a St. Peter of Alcantara, a St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and so many other Saints, on hearing that death was at hand, burst forth into exclamations of joy and gladness. And yet they were not certain of being in in possession of Divine grace, nor were they secure of their own sanctity, as Mary was.

But what joy must the Divine Mother have felt in receiving the news of her approaching death—she who had the fullest certainty of the possession of Divine grace, especially after the Angel Gabriel had assured her that she was full of grace, and that she already possessed God. *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!* And well did she herself know that her heart was continually burning with Divine love; so that, as Bernardine de Bustis says, "Mary, by a singular privilege granted to no other Saint, loved, and was always actually loving God, in every moment of her life, with such ardour, that St. Bernard declares it required a continued miracle to preserve her life in the midst of such flames."

Of Mary it had already been asked in the Sacred Can-

ticles : *Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke, of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and all the powders of the perfumer?*—(Cant. iii. 6). Her entire mortification typified by the myrrh, her fervent prayers signified by the incense, and all her holy virtues united to her perfect love for God, kindled in her a flame so great that her beautiful soul, wholly devoted to and consumed by Divine love, arose continually to God as a pillar of smoke, breathing forth on every side a most sweet odour. As the loving Virgin lived, so did she die. As Divine love gave her life, so did it cause her death; for the Doctors and holy Fathers of the Church generally say she died of no other infirmity than pure love; St. Ildephonsus says that Mary either ought not to die, or only die of love.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE.

2.—THE PROMPTITUDE OF MARY IN ASSISTING THOSE WHO INVOKE HER.

The multitude of our sins should not diminish our confidence that Mary will grant our petitions when we cast ourselves at her feet. She is the Mother of Mercy; but mercy would not be needed did none exist who require it. On this subject Richard of St. Laurence remarks, "that as a good mother does not shrink from applying a remedy to her child infected with ulcers, however nauseous and revolting they may be, so also is our good Mother unable to abandon us when we have recourse to her, that she may heal the wounds caused by our sins, however loathsome they may have rendered us." This is exactly what Mary gave St. Gertrude to understand, when she showed herself to her with her

mantle spread out to receive all who have recourse to her. At the same time the Saint was told that "Angels constantly guard the clients of this Blessed Virgin from the assaults of hell."

This good Mother's compassion is so great, and the love she bears us is such, that she does not even wait for our prayers in order to assist us; but, as it is expressed in the Book of Wisdom: *she preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them*—(Wisd. vi. 14). St. Anselm applies these words to Mary, and says that she is beforehand with those who desire her protection. By this we are to understand that she obtains us many favours from God before we have recourse to her. For this reason Richard of St. Victor remarks that she is called the moon, *fair as the moon*—(Cant. vi. 9), meaning, not only that she is swift as the moon in its course, by flying to the aid of those who invoke her, but that she is still more so, for her love for us is so tender that in our wants she anticipates our prayers, and her mercy is more prompt to help us than we are to ask her aid. "And this arises," adds the same Richard, "from the fact that the heart of Mary is so filled with compassion for poor sinners, that she no sooner sees our miseries than she pours her tender mercies upon us. Nor is it possible for this benign Queen to behold the want of any soul without immediately assisting it."

Mary, even when living in this world, showed at the marriage-feast of Cana the great compassion that she would afterwards exercise towards us in our necessities, and which now, as it were, forces her to have pity on us and assist us, even before we ask her to do so. In the Second Chapter of St. Luke we read that at this Feast the compassionate Mother saw the embarrassment in which the bride and bridegroom were, and that they were quite ashamed on seeing the wine fail; and therefore, without being asked, and listening only to the dictates of her compassionate heart, which could never behold the afflictions of others without feeling for them, she begged her Son to console them. This she did by

laying their distress before Him : *they have no wine* —(Jo. ii. 3). No sooner had she done so than our Lord, in order to satisfy all present, and still more to console the compassionate heart of His Mother, who had asked the favour, worked the well-known miracle by which He changed the water, brought to Him in jars, into wine. From this Novarinus argues that " if Mary, unasked, is thus prompt to succour the needy, how much more so will she be to succour those who invoke her and ask for her help ?"

Should there be any one who doubts as to whether Mary will aid him if he has recourse to her, Innocent III thus reproves him : " Who is there that ever, when in the night of sin, had recourse to this sweet Lady without being relieved ?"

" Who ever," exclaims the Blessed Eutychian, "faithfully implored thy all-powerful aid and was abandoned by thee ?" Indeed, no one for thou, Mary, canst relieve the most wretched and save the most abandoned. Such a case certainly never did and never will occur.

" I am satisfied," says St. Bernard, " that whoever has had recourse to thee, O Blessed Virgin, in his wants, and can remember that he did so in vain, should no more speak of or praise thy mercy."

" Sooner," says the devout Blosius, " would Heaven and earth be destroyed than would Mary fail to assist any one who asks for her help, provided he does so with a good intention and with confidence in her."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

It is clear how unjustly the Jews refused to recognise Jesus as the true Messias because He died so shameful a

death. They do not perceive that if, instead of dying as a malefactor upon the Cross, Jesus Christ had died a death accounted honourable and glorious by men, He would not have been that Messias Who was promised by God and predicted by the Prophets, who, so many ages before, had foretold that our Redeemer should die loaded with insults : *He shall give his cheek to the smiter, he shall be overwhelmed with insults*—(Lam. iii. 30). All these humiliations, and all the sufferings of Jesus Christ, already foretold by the Prophets, were not understood even by His disciples until after His Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven : *These things his disciples did not understand at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of him*—(Jo. xii. 16).

In a word, by the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was accompanied by so great sufferings and so great ignominy, that which David wrote was fulfilled : *Justice and peace have kissed*—(Ps. lxxxiv. 11). They kissed each other, because, by the merits of Jesus Christ, men obtained peace with God, while, at the same time, the Divine justice was more than abundantly satisfied by the death of the Redeemer. We say, *more than abundantly*, because to save us, it was not actually necessary that Jesus Christ should endure so many sufferings and insults. One single drop of Blood, one single prayer, would have been sufficient to save the whole world; while, in order to strengthen our hopes, and to inflame our love, Jesus Christ thought fit that our redemption should not only be sufficient, but more than abundant, as David foretold : *Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plentiful redemption*—(Ps. cxxix. 6, 7).

O Jesus, Infinite Goodness, I deserved to continue blind, and Thou hast enlightened me with new light; I deserved to continue still more hardened, and Thou hast given me tenderness and compunction; wherefore I now abhor the offences I have committed against Thee more than death, and I feel a great desire to love Thee. These graces, which I have received from Thee, assure me that

Thou hast now pardoned me, and desirest to save me. O my Jesus, who could cease to love Thee henceforth, or could love anything apart from Thee? I love Thee, O my Jesus, and I trust in Thee; increase in me this confidence and this love, that henceforth I may forget everything, and think of nothing but loving Thee and giving Thee pleasure.

O Mary, Mother of God, obtain for me the grace of being faithful to thy Son and my Redeemer.

II.

When speaking in the person of the Messias, Job said: *O that my sins . . . and the calamity that I suffer were weighed in a balance. As the sand of the sea this would appear heavier*—(Job vi. 2, 3). Here Jesus, by the mouth of Job, calls our sins His sins, because He had bound Himself to make satisfaction for us, in order to make His justice ours, as St. Augustine expresses it. On this account the *gloss* upon the text quoted from Job contains this remark: "In the balance of the Divine justice the Passion of Christ outweighs the sins of human nature." All the lives of men would not have been sufficient to make satisfaction for a single sin; but the pains of Jesus Christ have paid for all our sins: *He is the propitiation of our sins*—(1 Jo. ii. 2). Therefore, St. Laurence Justinian encourages every sinner who truly repents to hope confidently for pardon through the merits of Jesus Christ, saying to them: "Measure thy sins by the afflictions of Christ the Sufferer"; meaning thereby to say: "O sinner, measure not thy guilt by thy contrition, for all thy works cannot obtain thee pardon; measure it by the pains of Jesus Christ, and from them hope for pardon, for thy Redeemer hath abundantly paid thy debt."

O Saviour of the world, in Thy flesh, torn with scourgings, with thorns, and with nails, I comprehend the love Thou hast borne me, and my ingratitude in having so injured Thee after such love; but Thy Blood is my hope, for, with the price of Thy Blood, Thou hast redeemed

me from hell as often as I have deserved it. O God! what would become of me through all eternity if Thou hadst not determined to save me by Thy death! Miserable man that I am, I knew full well that, by losing Thy grace, I condemned myself to live forever in despair, and far from Thee in hell; and yet I repeatedly dared to turn my back upon Thee. But still I will ever say, Thy Blood is my hope. Oh, that I had died and not offended Thee!

Tuesday—Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

III.—THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD.

After the Ascension of her Divine Son, Mary remained, indeed, willingly on this earth, knowing that such was the will of God, but she could not but feel the pain of being far from the sight of her beloved Son. Hence she was sending up continual sighs to her Lord, saying with the Psalmist: *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly away and be at rest?*

1.

Let us now consider how Mary's blessed death took place.

After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, she remained on earth to attend to the propagation of the Faith. Hence the disciples of our Lord had recourse to her, and she solved their doubts, comforted them in their persecutions, and encouraged them to labour for the Divine glory and

the salvation of redeemed souls. She willingly remained on earth, knowing that such was the will of God, for the good of the Church; but she could not but feel the pain of being far from the presence and sight of her beloved Son, Who had ascended to Heaven. *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*—(Luke xii. 34), said the Redeemer. Where any one believes his treasure and his happiness to be, there he always holds the love and desires of his heart fixed. If Mary, then, loved no other good than Jesus, He being in Heaven, all her desires were in Heaven.

Tauler says that Heaven was the dwelling-place of the most Blessed Virgin Mary; for, being there with all her desires and affections, she made it her continual abode. Her school was eternity; for she was always detached and free from temporal possessions. Her teacher was Divine Truth; for her whole life was guided by this alone. Her book was the purity of her own conscience, in which she always found occasion to rejoice in the Lord. Her mirror was the Divinity; for she never admitted any representations into her soul but such as were transformed into and clothed with God, that so she might always conform herself to His will. Her ornament was devotion; for she attended solely to her interior sanctification, and was always ready to fulfil the Divine commands. Her repose was union with God; for He alone was her treasure and the resting-place of her heart.

II.

The most holy Virgin consoled her loving heart during this painful separation by visiting, as it is related, the Holy Places of Palestine, where her Son had been during His life. She frequently visited—at one time the Stable at Bethlehem, where her Son was born; at another, the Workshop of Nazareth, where her Son had lived so many years poor and despised; now the Garden of Gethsemanai, where her Son began His Passion; then the Praetorium of Pilate, where He was scourged, and the spot on which He was crowned with thorns; but she

visited most frequently the Mount of Calvary, where her Son expired; and the Holy Sepulchre in which she had finally left Him: thus did the most loving Mother soothe the pains of her cruel exile. But this could not be sufficient to satisfy her heart, which was unable to find perfect repose in this world. Hence she was continually sending up sighs to her Lord, exclaiming with David: *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?*—(Ps. liv. 7). Who will give me wings like a dove, that I may fly to my God, and there find my repose? *As the hart panteth after the fountains of water: so my soul panteth after thee, O God*—(Ps. xli. 1). As the wounded stag pants for the fountain, so does my soul, wounded by Thy love, O my God, desire and sigh after Thee.

Yes, indeed, the sighs of this holy turtle-dove could not but deeply penetrate the Heart of her God, Who indeed so tenderly loved her. *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land*—(Cant. ii. 12). Wherefore being unwilling to defer any longer the so-much-desired consolation of His beloved, behold, He graciously hears her desire, and calls her to His kingdom.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE.

3.—THE PROMPTITUDE OF MARY IN ASSISTING THOSE WHO INVOKE HER.

To increase our confidence in Mary, St. Anselm says that "when we have recourse to this Divine Mother, not only may we be sure of her protection, but that often we shall be heard more quickly, and be thus preserved, if we have recourse to Mary and call on her holy name, than we should be if we called on the Name of Jesus our

Saviour." And the reason he gives for it is, that "to Jesus, as Judge, it belongs also to punish; but Mercy alone belongs to the Blessed Virgin as a patroness." Meaning; that we more easily find salvation by having recourse to the Mother than by going to the Son—not as if Mary was more powerful than her Son to save us, for we know that Jesus Christ is our only Saviour, and that He alone by His merits has obtained and still obtains salvation for us; but it is for this reason: that when we have recourse to Jesus we consider Him at the same time as our Judge, to whom it belongs also to chastise ungrateful souls, and therefore the confidence necessary to be heard may fail us; but when we go to Mary, who has no other office than to compassionate us as Mother of Mercy, and to defend us as our advocate, our confidence is more easily established, and is often greater. "We often obtain more promptly what we ask by calling on the name of Mary than by invoking that of Jesus. Her Son is Lord and Judge of all, and discerns the merits of each one; and therefore if He does not immediately grant the prayers of all, He is just. When, however, the Mother's name is invoked, though the merits of the suppliant are not such as to deserve that his prayer should be granted, those of the Mother supply that he may receive."

"Many things," says Nicephorus, "are asked from God, and are not granted: they are asked from Mary, and are obtained." And how is this? It is "because God has thus decreed to honour His Mother." St. Bridget heard our Lord make a most sweet and consoling promise; for in the 50th chapter of the first book of her Revelations we read that Jesus addressed His Mother in the following words: "Thou shalt present Me with no petition that shall be refused. My Mother, ask what thou wilt, for never will I refuse thee anything; and know," He added, "that I promise graciously to hear all those who ask any favour of Me in thy name, though they may be sinners, if only they have the will to amend their lives." The same thing was revealed to St. Gertrude, when she heard our Divine Redeemer assure His Mother, that in His Omnipotence He granted her power

to show mercy, in whatever manner she might please, t
sinners who invoke her.

Let all, then, say, with full confidence in the words c
that beautiful prayer addressed to the Mother of Mercy
and commonly attributed to St. Bernard : " Remembe
O most pious Virgin Mary, that it never was heard of i
any age that any one having recourse to thy protectio
was abandoned."

We read in the Life of St. Francis de Sales that h
experienced the efficacy of this prayer, the *Memorare*
When he was about seventeen years of age he was i
Paris, pursuing his studies. At the same time he devote
himself to exercises of piety and to the holy love of God
in which he found the joys of Paradise. Our Lord, i
order to try him, and to strengthen the bands whic
united him to Himself, allowed the evil spirit to persuad
him that all that he did was in vain, as he was already
condemned in the eternal decrees of God. The darkness
and spiritual dryness in which God was pleased at th
same time to leave him (for he was then insensible t
all the sweeter thoughts of the goodness of God) caused
the temptation to have greater power over the heart o
the holy youth : and, indeed, it reached such a pitch tha
his fears and his interior desolation took away his appe-
tite, deprived him of sleep, made him pale and melan-
choly ; so much so that he excited the compassion of al
who saw him.

As long as this terrible storm lasted, the Saint could
only conceive thoughts and utter words of despondency
and bitter grief. " Then," said he, " I am to be
deprived of the grace of my God, Who hitherto has
shown Himself so lovely and sweet to me ! O Love
O Beauty, to which I have consecrated all my affections
I am no longer to enjoy Thy consolations ! O Virgin
Mother of God, the fairest amongst all the daughters o
Jerusalem, then I am never to see thee in Heaven ! Ah
Lady, if I am not to behold thy beautiful countenance in
Paradise, at least permit me not to blaspheme thee in
hell !" Such were the tender sentiments of that afflicted
but at the same time loving heart. The temptation had

fasted a month when it pleased our Lord to deliver him by the means of that comfortress of the world, the most Blessed Mary, to whom the Saint had some time before consecrated his virginity, and in whom, as he declared, he had placed all his hopes. One evening, on returning home, he entered a church, and saw a tablet hanging on the wall. He read it, and found the following well-known prayer, commonly called the "Prayer of St. Bernard": "Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary, that it never has been heard of in any age, that any one having recourse to thy protection was abandoned." Falling on his knees before the altar of the Divine Mother, he recited this prayer with tender fervour, renewed his vow of chastity, promised to say the Rosary every day, and then added: "My Queen, be my advocate with thy Son, Whom I dare not approach. My Mother, if I am so unfortunate as not to be able to love my Lord in the next world, Him whom I know to be so worthy of love, at least do thou obtain that I may love Him in this world as much as possible. This is the grace I ask and hope for from thee." Having thus addressed the Blessed Virgin he cast himself into the arms of Divine Mercy, and resigned himself entirely to the will of God. Scarcely had he finished his prayer, when in an instant he was delivered from his temptation by his most sweet Mother. He immediately regained the peace of his soul, and with it his bodily health; and from that time forward he lived most devoted to Mary, whose praises and mercies he constantly extolled, both in his sermons and writings, during the remainder of his life.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

St. Paul says of Jesus Christ : *He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant* —(Phil. ii. 7). On this text St. Bernard remarks : " He took not only the form of a servant, that He might obey, but that of a slave, that He might be beaten." Our Redeemer, Who is the Lord of all, was willing not only to take upon Him the condition of a servant, but even that of a bad servant, that He might be punished as a malefactor, and thus make satisfaction for our sins.

It is certain that the scourging was the most cruel of the tortures that shortened the life of our Redeemer; for the great effusion of Blood (already foretold by Him, when He said : *This is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many*)—(Matt. xxvi. 28), was the principal cause of His death. It is true that this Blood was first poured forth in the Garden, and was also poured forth in the Crowning with Thorns, and by the driving-in of the Nails; but the largest portion was shed in the Scourging, which was also a cause of great shame and insult to Jesus Christ, because this was a punishment inflicted only on slaves. On this account, also, the tyrants who condemned the holy Martyrs to death scourged them after their condemnation, and then slew them; while our Lord was scourged before He was condemned to death. He had Himself particularly predicted the scourging to His disciples during His life : *He shall be given up to the Gentiles, and mocked and scourged* (Luke xviii. 32). Thus He signified to them the great anguish which this torture would inflict upon Him.

Behold me, O my Jesus, I am one of Thy most cruel executioners, who have scourged Thee with my sins;

have pity upon me. O my loving Saviour, one heart is too little with which to love Thee. I desire no longer to live for myself, I desire to live only for Thee, my Love, my All!

II.

It was revealed to St. Bridget that one of the executioners first commanded Jesus Christ to strip Himself of His garments. He obeyed, and then embraced the pillar to which He was bound, and was then so cruelly scourged that His whole body was lacerated. The revelation stated that the stripes not only struck Him, but ploughed into His most holy flesh. He was so torn open that, as the same revelation declares, His ribs were laid bare. With this agrees what was written by St. Jerome: "The stripes cut the most holy body of God"; and also what St. Peter Damian wrote, that the executioners exhausted themselves with fatigue in scourging our Lord. All this was already foretold by Isaias in the words, *He was bruised for our sins*—(Is. liii. 5); the word bruised signifying the same as being broken to pieces, or as being pounded in a mortar.

O Jesus, I say to Thee, with St. Catharine of Genoa: "O Love! O Love! Let there be no more sins! It is enough that I have already offended Thee so much! Now I hope to be wholly Thine, and with Thy grace I desire to be ever Thine through all eternity."

Wednesday—Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

IV.—THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD.

It is related that our Lord sent St. Gabriel, the same Archangel who announced to her that she was chosen to be the Mother of God, to announce now that her Divine Son willed to call her to Heaven. On this happy Annunciation, what could the most humble and holy Virgin do, but answer: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord!* Behold, I am ready!

1.

Nicephorus, Metaphrastes, and others relate that some days before her death, our Lord sent her the Archangel Gabriel, the same that announced to her that she was that blessed woman chosen to be the Mother of God: "My Lady and Queen," said the Angel, "God has already graciously heard thy holy desires, and has sent me to tell thee to prepare thyself to leave the earth; for He wills thee in Heaven. Come, then, to take possession of thy kingdom; for I and all its holy inhabitants await and desire thee." On this happy Annunciation, what else could our most humble and most holy Virgin do, but, with the most profound humility, answer again in the same words in which she had answered St. Gabriel when he announced to her that she was to become the Mother of God: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*—(Luke i. 38). Behold, she answered, the slave of the

Lord. He in His pure goodness chose me and made me His Mother. He now calls me to Paradise. I did not deserve that honour, nor do I deserve this. But since He is pleased to show in my person His infinite liberality, behold, I am ready to go where He pleases. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord!* May the will of my God and Lord be ever accomplished in me!

After receiving this welcome intelligence she imparted it to St. John. We may well imagine with what grief and tender feelings he heard the news; he who for so many years had attended upon her as a son, and had enjoyed the heavenly conversation of this most holy Mother. She then once more visited the Holy Places of Jerusalem, tenderly taking leave of them, and especially of Mount Calvary, where her beloved Son had died. She then retired to her poor cottage, there to prepare for death.

II.

During this time the Angels did not cease their visits to their beloved Queen, consoling themselves with the thought that they would soon see her crowned in Heaven. Many authors, such as Andrew of Crete, St. John Damascene, Euthymius, assert that, before her death, the Apostles, and also many Disciples who were scattered in different parts of the world, were miraculously assembled in Mary's room, and that when she saw all these dear children in her presence, she thus addressed them: "My beloved children, through love for you and to help you my Son left me on this earth. The holy Faith is now spread throughout the world and already the fruit of the Divine seed is grown up; hence my Lord, seeing that my assistance on earth is no longer necessary, and compassionating my grief in being separated from Him, has graciously listened to my desire to quit this life and to go and see Him in Heaven. Do you remain, then, to labour for His glory. If I leave you, my heart remains with you; the great love I bear you I shall carry with me and always preserve. I go to Paradise to pray for you."

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE.

4.—THE GREATNESS OF MARY'S POWER TO DEFEND THOSE WHO INVOKE HER WHEN TEMPTED.

The Most Blessed Virgin is not only Queen of Heaven and of all Saints, but she is also Queen of hell and of all evil spirits; for she overcame them valiantly by her virtues. From the very beginning God foretold the victory and empire our Queen would one day obtain over the serpent, when He announced that a woman should come into the world to conquer him: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman . . . she shall crush thy head*—(Gen. iii. 15).

Who could this woman, Satan's enemy, be but Mary, who by her fair humility and holy life always conquered him and beat down his strength? The Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ was promised in the person of that woman, as is remarked by St. Cyprian. Therefore God did not say, "I place," but "I will place"; lest He might seem to refer to Eve. God said, *I will place enmities between thee and the woman*, to signify that the serpent's opponent was not to be Eve, who was then living, but would be another woman descending from her, and who, as St. Vincent Ferrer observes, "would bring our First Parents far greater advantages than those which they had lost by their sin." Mary, then, was this great and valiant woman, who conquered the devil and crushed his head by bringing down his pride, as it was foretold by God Himself: *she shall crush thy head.* Some doubt as to whether these words refer to Mary, or whether they do not rather refer to Jesus Christ; for the Septuagint renders them, *He shall crush thy head.* But in the Vulgate, which alone was approved of by the Sacred Council of Trent, we find *She* and not *He*; and

thus it was understood by St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and a great many others. However, be it as it may, it is certain that either the Son by means of the Mother, or the Mother by means of the Son, has overcome Lucifer; so that, as St. Bernard remarks, this proud spirit, in spite of himself, was beaten down and trampled under foot by this most Blessed Virgin; so that, as a slave conquered in war, he is forced always to obey the commands of this Queen. "Beaten down and trampled under the feet of Mary, he endures a wretched slavery." St. Bruno says "that Eve was the cause of death," by allowing herself to be overcome by the serpent, "but that Mary," by conquering the devil, "restored life to us." And she bound him in such a way that this enemy cannot stir so as to do the least injury to any of her clients.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The Divine Mother revealed to St. Bridget that the Crown of Thorns surrounded the whole sacred head of her Son, as low down as the middle of His forehead; and that the thorns were driven in with such violence that the Blood gushed out in streams over all His countenance, so that the whole face of Jesus Christ appeared covered with Blood.

Origen writes that this Crown of Thorns was not taken from the head of the Lord until He had expired upon the Cross. In the meantime, as the inner garment of Christ was not sewed together, but woven all in one piece, on this account it was not divided among the soldiers, like his outer garments, but it was given by lot, as St. John

writes : *The soldiers, therefore, when they had crucified him, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another : Let us not cut it; but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be*—(Jo. xix. 23, 24). As this garment, then, must have been drawn off over the head, many authors write with great probability, that when Jesus was stripped of it, the crown of thorns was taken from His head, and was replaced before He was nailed to the Cross.

O my Jesus, what thorns have I added to this crown with my sinful thoughts to which I have consented ! Would that I could die with grief ! Pardon me, through the merit of the grief Thou didst then accept in order to pardon me. O my Lord, thus bruised and thus despised ! Thou hast loaded Thyself with all these pains and mockeries in order to move me to have compassion upon Thee, that, at least through compassion, I may love Thee, and no more displease Thee.

II.

In the book of Genesis it is written : *Cursed is the earth in thy work; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee*—(Gen. iii. 17). This curse was inflicted by God upon Adam and upon all his posterity; and by the earth here spoken of we must understand, not only the material earth, but the flesh of man, which, being infected by the sin of Adam, brings forth only the thorns of sin. In order to remedy this infection, says Tertullian, it was necessary that Jesus Christ should offer to God in sacrifice this great torment of the Crowning with Thorns.

This torture also, besides being in itself most acute, was accompanied by blows and spitting, and by the mockings of the soldiers, as St. Matthew and St. John relate : *And plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying : Hail, King of the Jews ! And spitting upon him, they took the reed,*

and struck his head—(Matt. xxvii. 29-30). *And the soldiers plaiting a crown of thorns, put it upon his head; and they put on him a purple garment. And they came to him and said : Hail, King of the Jews! and they gave him blows*—(Jo. xix. 3).

It is enough, O my Jesus; cease to suffer more; I am convinced of the love Thou bearest to me, and I love Thee with all my heart. But now I see that it is not enough for Thee; Thou art not satisfied with thorns, until Thou findest Thyself dead with anguish upon the Cross. O Goodness! O infinite Love! Miserable is the heart that loves Thee not!

Thursday—Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

V.—THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD.

Who can form an idea of the tears and lamentations of the holy Disciples when holy Mary told them she was about to leave them, and they were to be separated from their Mother! But the Blessed Virgin consoled them by saying : "My children, I do not leave you to abandon you, but to help you still more in Heaven. Be at peace! One day we shall meet again in Paradise never to be separated for all eternity."

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1.

Who can form an idea of the tears and lamentations of the holy Disciples at the sad announcement that holy

Mary was leaving them, and at the thought that soon they were to be separated from their Mother? All then, weeping, exclaimed, "Then, O Mother, thou art already about to leave us. It is true that this world is not a place worthy of or fit for thee; and as for us, we are unworthy to enjoy the society of the Mother of God; but, remember, thou art our Mother; hitherto thou hast enlightened us in our doubts; thou hast consoled us in our afflictions; thou hast been our strength in persecutions; and now, how canst thou abandon us, leaving us alone in the midst of so many enemies and so many conflicts, deprived of thy consolations? We have already lost on earth Jesus, our Master and Father, Who has ascended into Heaven; until now we have found consolation in thee, our Mother; and now, how canst thou also leave us orphans without father or mother? Our own sweet Lady, either remain with us, or take us with thee." St. John Damascene makes the loving Queen speak sweetly thus: "No, my children, this is not according to the will of God. Be satisfied to do that which He has decreed for me and for you. To you it yet remains to labour on earth for the glory of your Redeemer, and to make up your eternal crown. I do not leave you to abandon you, but to help you still more in Heaven by my intercession with God. Be satisfied. I commend the holy Church to you; I commend redeemed souls to you; let this be my last farewell, and the only remembrance I leave you. Execute it if you love me, labour for the good of souls and for the glory of my Son; for one day we shall meet again in Paradise, never more for all eternity to be separated."

II.

The Blessed Virgin then begged them to give burial to her body after death; blessed them, and desired St. John, as St. John Damascene relates, to give after her death two of her gowns to two virgins who had served her for some time. She then decently composed herself on her poor little bed, where she laid herself to await death, and

with it the meeting with the Divine Spouse, Who shortly was to come and take her with Him to the Kingdom of the Blessed. Behold, she already feels in her heart a great joy, the forerunner of the coming of the Bridegroom, which inundates her with a new and unaccustomed sweetness. The holy Apostles, seeing that Mary was already on the point of leaving this world, renewing their tears, all threw themselves on their knees around her bed; some kissed her holy feet, some sought a special blessing from her, some recommended a particular want, and all wept bitterly; for their hearts were pierced with grief at being obliged to separate themselves for the rest of their lives from their beloved Lady. And she, the most loving Mother, compassionated all, and consoled each one; to some promising her patronage, blessing others with particular affection, and encouraging others to the work of the conversion of the world; especially, she called St. Peter to her, and as head of the Church and vicar of her Son, recommended to him in a particular manner the propagation of the Faith, promising him at the same time her especial protection in Heaven. But more particularly did she wish St. John to come to her, who more than any other was grieved at this moment when he had to part with his holy Mother; and the most gracious Lady, remembering the affection and attention with which this holy disciple had served her during all the years she had remained on earth since the death of her Son, said: "My own John, I thank thee for all the assistance thou hast afforded me. My son, be assured of it, I shall not be ungrateful. If I now leave thee, I go to pray for thee. Remain in peace in this life until we meet again in Heaven, where I await thee. Never forget me. In all thy wants call me to thy aid, for I will never forget thee, my beloved son. I bless thee. I leave thee my blessing. Remain in peace. Farewell!"

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE.

5.—THE GREATNESS OF MARY'S POWER TO DEFEND THOSE WHO INVOKE HER WHEN TEMPTED.

Beautiful is the explanation given by Richard of St. Laurence of the following words of the Book of Proverbs : *The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils*—(Prov. xxxi. 11). He says, applying them to Jesus and Mary : " The heart of her Spouse, that is Christ, trusteth in her, and He shall have no need of spoils; for she endows Him with all those whom by her prayers, merits, and example, she snatches from the devil." " God has entrusted the Heart of Jesus to the hands of Mary, that she may insure it the love of men," says Cornelius à Lapide; and thus He will not need spoils; that is, He will be abundantly supplied with souls; for she enriches Him with those whom she has snatched from hell, and saved from the devil by her powerful assistance.

It is well known that the palm is a sign of victory; and therefore our Queen is placed on a high throne, in sight of all the powers, as a palm, for a sign of the certain victory that all may promise themselves who place themselves under her protection. *I was exalted like a palm-tree in Cades,* says Ecclesiasticus—(Ecclus. xxiv. 18); " that is, to defend," adds Blessed Albert the Great. " My children," Mary seems to say, " when the enemy assails you, fly to me; cast your eyes on me, and be of good heart; for as I am your defender, victory is assured to you." So that recourse to Mary is a most secure means to conquer all the assaults of hell; for she, says St. Bernardine of Sienna, is even the Queen of hell and sovereign mistress of the devils : since she it is who tames and crushes them. He thus expresses his thought :

" The most Blessed Virgin rules over the infernal regions. She is therefore called the ruling mistress of the devils, because she brings them into subjection." For this reason Mary is said in the sacred Canticles to be terrible to the infernal powers *as an army set in array*—(Cant. vi. 3), and she is called thus terrible, because she well knows how to array her power, her mercy, and her prayers, to the discomfiture of her enemies, and for the benefit of her servants, who in their temptations have recourse to her most powerful aid.

As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour —(Ecclus. xxiv. 23). Thus does the Holy Ghost make Mary speak in the Book of Ecclesiasticus. " We are told," says St. Bernard on this passage, that " all venemous reptiles fly from flowering vines"; and as poisonous reptiles fly from flowering vines, so do devils fly from those fortunate souls in whom they perceive the perfume of devotion to Mary. And therefore she also calls herself, in the same Book, a cedar : *I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 17). Not only because she was untainted by sin, as the cedar is incorruptible, but also, as Cardinal Hugo remarks on the foregoing text, because, " like the cedar, which by its odour keeps off worms, so also does Mary by her sanctity drive away the devils."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The Cross began to torture Jesus Christ before He was nailed upon it; for after He was condemned by Pilate, the Cross on which He was to die was given Him to carry to Calvary, and, without refusing, He took it upon His shoulders. Speaking of this, St. Augustine writes :

"If we regard the wickedness of His tormentors, the insult was great; if we regard the love of Jesus, the mystery is great; for in carrying the Cross, our Captain then lifted up the Standard under which His followers upon this earth must be enrolled and fight, in order to be made His companions in the kingdom of Heaven."

St. Basil, speaking of the passage in Isaias: *A child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder*—(Is. ix. 6), says that "earthly tyrants load their subjects with unjust burdens, in order to increase their own power; but Jesus Christ chose to take upon Himself the burden of the Cross, and to carry it, in order that, leaving life to us therein, He might obtain salvation for us." He further remarks that the kings of the earth founded their sovereignties on force of arms and in the heaping up of riches; but Jesus Christ founded His sovereignty in the insults of the Cross—that is, in humbling Himself and in suffering,—and on this account He willingly accepted it, and carried it on that painful journey, in order, by His example, to give us courage to embrace with resignation every cross, and thus to follow Him. Wherefore, also, He said to His disciples: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me*—(Matt. xvi. 24).

II.

Let us here meditate upon the beautiful expressions applied to the Cross by St. John Chrysostom:

He calls it *the hope of the despairing;* for what hope of salvation would sinners have were it not for the Cross on which Jesus Christ died to save them?

The guide of the voyager; for the humiliation of the Cross (that is, of tribulation) is the cause which, in the dangerous ocean of this life, gives us grace to keep the Divine law, and to correct ourselves after our transgressions, as the Psalmist says: *It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I might learn thy justifications*—(Ps. cxviii. 71).

The Cross is *the counsellor of the just;* because in

adversities the just learn wisdom, and gain motives for uniting themselves more closely to God.

The Cross is *the rest of the troubled;* for where can the troubled find relief but in beholding that Cross on which their Redeemer and God died of pain for love of them?

The Cross is *the exultation of the Martyrs;* because in this consists the glory of the holy Martyrs, that they were able to unite their deaths to the pains and death Jesus Christ suffered on the Cross; as St. Paul says: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*—(Gal. vi. 14).

The Cross is *the physician of the sick;* and great indeed is the remedy of the Cross to those who are sick in spirit; tribulations make them repent, and detach them from the world.

The Cross is *the fount for the thirsty;* for the Cross, that is, suffering for Jesus Christ, was the desire of the Saints, as St. Teresa was wont to say: "Oh that I might suffer! Or that I might die!" and as St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi said, "May I suffer, and not die!" meaning that she would refuse to die in order that she might continue to suffer upon this earth, rather than go to rejoice in Heaven.

Finally, to speak of all alike, both the just and sinners, every one has his own cross. The just, though they enjoy peace of conscience, yet all have their vicissitudes; at one time they are comforted by visits of Divine mercy, at another they are afflicted by bodily vexations and infirmities, and especially by desolation of spirit, by darkness and weariness, by scruples and temptations, and by fears for their salvation. Much heavier are the crosses of sinners, through remorse of conscience, through the terrors of eternal punishment, which from time to time affright them, and through the pains they suffer when things go wrong with them. The Saints, when adversities befall them, unite themselves with the Divine will, and suffer with patience; but how can the sinner calm himself by the remembrance of the Divine will when he is living at enmity with God? The pains of the enemies of God are unmixed pains, pains without relief.

Wherefore St. Teresa was wont to say that "he who loves God embraces the cross, and thus does not feel it; while he who does not love God drags the cross and thus cannot but feel it."

Friday—Eleventh Week after Pentecost

(First Friday of August)

Morning Meditation

THE AMIABLE HEART OF JESUS.

The Heart of Jesus is all pure, all holy, all full of love towards God and towards us. Every perfection, every virtue reigns in this Heart. This is the Heart in which God Himself finds all His delight. O amiable Heart of Jesus, Thou dost well deserve the love of all hearts.

I.

He who shows himself amiable in everything must necessarily make himself loved. Oh, if we only applied ourselves to discover all the good qualities by which Jesus Christ renders Himself worthy of our love, we should all be under the happy necessity of loving Him. And what heart among all hearts can be found more worthy of love than the Heart of Jesus? A Heart all pure, all holy, all full of love towards God and towards us; because all Its desires are only for the Divine glory and our good. This is the Heart in which God finds all His delight. Every perfection, every virtue reigns in this Heart;—a most ardent love for God, His

Father, united to the greatest humility and respect that can possibly exist; a sovereign confusion for our sins, which He has taken upon Himself, united to the extreme confidence of a most affectionate Son; a sovereign abhorrence of our sins, united to a lively compassion for our miseries; an extreme sorrow, united to a perfect conformity to the Will of God; so that in Jesus is found everything that is most amiable.

O my amiable Redeemer, what object more worthy of love could the Eternal Father command me to love than Thee? Thou art the Beauty of Paradise, Thou art the Love of Thy Father, Thy Heart is the throne of all virtues. O amiable Heart of my Jesus, Thou dost well deserve the love of all hearts; poor and wretched is that heart which loves Thee not! Thus miserable, O my God, has my heart been during all the time in which it has not loved Thee. But I will not continue to be thus wretched; I love Thee, I will always continue to love Thee, O my Jesus. O my Lord, I have hitherto forgotten Thee, and now what can I expect? That my ingratitude will oblige Thee to forget me entirely and forsake me forever? No, my Saviour, do not permit it. Thou art the object of the love of God; and shalt Thou not, then, be loved by a miserable sinner such as I am, who have been so favoured and loved by Thee? O lovely flames that burn in the amiable Heart of my Jesus, enkindle in my poor heart that holy fire which Jesus came down from Heaven to kindle on earth. Consume and destroy all the impure affections that dwell in my heart and prevent it from being entirely His.

II.

Some are attracted to love others by their beauty, others by their innocence, others by living with them, others by devotion. But if there were a person in whom these and all good qualities were united, who could help loving him? If we heard that there was in a distant foreign country a prince who was handsome, humble, courteous, devout, full of charity, affable to all, who

rendered good to those who did him evil; then, although we knew not who he was, and though he knew not us, and though we were not acquainted with him, nor was there any possibility of our ever being so, yet we should be enamoured of him, and should be constrained to love him. How is it, then, possible, that Jesus Christ, Who possesses in Himself all these virtues, and in the most perfect degree, and Who loves us so tenderly, how is it possible that He should be so little loved by men, and should not be the only object of our love? O my God, how is it that Jesus, Who alone is worthy of love, and Who has given us so many proofs of the love that He bears us, should be alone, as it were, the unlucky One with us, Who cannot arrive at making us love Him; as if He were not sufficiently worthy of our love! This is what caused floods of tears to St. Rose of Lima, St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, who, on considering the ingratitude of men, exclaimed, weeping: "Love is not loved! Love is not loved!"

O my God, grant that I may exist only to love Thee, and Thee alone, my dearest Saviour. If at one time I despised Thee, Thou art now the only object of my love. I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, and I will never love any but Thee! My beloved Lord, do not disdain to accept the love of a heart which once afflicted Thee by my sins. Let it be Thy glory to exhibit to the Angels a heart now burning with love, a heart which hitherto shunned and despised Thee. Most holy Virgin Mary, my hope, do thou assist me, and beseech Jesus to make me, by His grace, all that He wishes me to be.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE.

6.—THE GREATNESS OF MARY'S POWER TO DEFEND US WHEN TEMPTED.

In Judea victories were gained by means of the ark. Thus it was that Moses conquered his enemies, as we learn from the Book of Numbers. *And when the ark was lifted up, Moses said : Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered*—(Num. x. 35). Thus was Jericho conquered; thus also the Philistines; *for the Ark of God was there*—(1 Kings xiv. 18). It is well known that this ark was a figure of Mary. Cornelius à Lapide says, "In time of danger Christians should fly to the most Blessed Virgin, who contained Christ as manna in the ark of her womb, and brought Him forth to be the food and salvation of the world." For as manna was in the ark, so is Jesus (of whom manna was a figure) in Mary; and by means of this ark we gain the victory over our earthly and infernal enemies. And thus, St. Bernardine of Sienna well observes, when Mary, the ark of the New Testament, was raised to the dignity of Queen of Heaven, the power of hell over men was weakened and dissolved.

The infernal spirits tremble at the very thought of Mary, and of her august name, says St. Bonaventure. "Oh, how terrible is Mary to the devils!" The Saint compares these enemies to those of whom Job speaks : *He diggeth through houses in the dark . . . If the morning suddenly appear, it is to them the shadow of death* —(Job. xxiv. 16, 17). Thieves go and rob houses in the dark; but as soon as morning dawns they fly, as if they beheld the shadow of death. "Precisely thus," in the words of the same St. Bonaventure, "do the devils enter a soul in the time of darkness"; meaning when the soul is in the obscurity of ignorance. They dig through the

house of our mind when it is in the darkness of ignorance. But then, he adds, " if suddenly they are overtaken by the dawn, that is, if the grace and mercy of Mary enters the soul, its brightness instantly dispels the darkness, and puts the infernal enemies to flight, as if they fled from death." Oh, blessed is he who always invokes the beautiful name of Mary in his conflicts with hell !

In confirmation of this, it was revealed to St. Bridget that " God had rendered Mary so powerful over the devils, that as often as they assault a devout client who calls on this most Blessed Virgin for help, she at a single glance instantly terrifies them, so that they fly far away, preferring to have their pains redoubled rather than see themselves thus subject to the power of Mary."

The Divine Bridegroom, when speaking of this His beloved bride, calls her a lily : *As the lily is amongst the thorns, so is my beloved amongst the daughters*—(Cant. ii. 2). On these words, Cornelius à Lapide makes the reflection : " As the lily is a remedy against serpents and venemous things, so is the invocation of Mary a specific by which we may overcome all temptations, and especially those against purity, as all find who put it in practice."

St. John Damascene used to say : " While I keep my hope in thee unconquerable, O Mother of God, I shall be safe. I will fight and overcome my enemies with no other buckler than thy protection and thy all-powerful aid." And all who are so fortunate as to be the servants of this great Queen can say the same thing. O Mother of God, if I hope in thee, I most certainly shall not be overcome ; for, defended by thee, I will pursue my enemies, and oppose them with the shield of thy protection and thy all-powerful help ; and then without doubt I shall conquer. For, says St. James the Monk (who was a Doctor amongst the Greeks), addressing our Lord : " Thou, O Lord, hast given us in Mary arms that no force of war can overcome, and a trophy never to be destroyed."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

It was revealed to St. Bridget that when the Saviour was laid upon the Cross, He stretched out His right hand to the place where it was to be nailed. Executioners immediately nailed the other hand, and then His sacred feet; and Jesus Christ was left to die upon this bed of anguish. St. Augustine says that the punishment of the Cross was a most bitter torment, because, upon the Cross death itself was prolonged, lest the pain should be speedily ended.

O God! what horror must then have smitten Heaven at the sight of the Son of the Eternal Father crucified between two thieves! Such, in truth, was the Prophecy of Isaias: *He was reputed with the wicked*—(Is. liii. 12). Wherefore St. John Chrysostom, contemplating Jesus upon the Cross, cried out, full of amazement and love: "I see Him in the midst, in the holy Trinity! I see Him in the midst, between Moses and Elias! I see Him in the midst, between two thieves!" As though he had said: "I see my Saviour first in Heaven between the Father and the Holy Ghost; I see Him upon Mount Tabor, between two Saints, Moses and Elias; how, then, is it I see Him crucified upon Calvary between two thieves?" How could this come to pass, but through the Divine decree, that thus He must die, to satisfy by His death for the sins of men, and to save men from death, as Isaias had foretold: *He was reputed with the wicked, and he hath borne the sins of many*—(Is. liii. 12).

II.

The same Prophet asks: *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra; this beautiful*

one in his robe, walking in the greatness of his strength? (Is. lxiii. 1). And he gives the answer : *I that speak justice, and am a defender to save*—(Is. lxiii. 1). The person who thus replies is, according to the interpreters, Jesus Christ, Who says : I am the promised Messias, Who am come to save men, by my triumph over their enemies.

Then, further, He is again asked : *Why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine-press?*—(Is. lxiii. 2). And He answers, *I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me*—(Is. lxiii. 3). Tertullian, St. Cyprian, and St. Augustine explain the wine-press to mean the Passion of Jesus Christ, in which His garments—that is, His most holy flesh—was covered with blood and wounds, according to what St. John wrote : *He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood; and his name is called the Word of God*—(Apoc. xix. 13). St. Gregory, explaining the expression, *I have trodden the wine-press alone*, says, "He trod the wine-press, and was Himself trodden." He trod it, because Jesus Christ, by His Passion, overcame the devil; He was trodden, because, in His Passion, His body was bruised and broken, as the grapes are broken in the wine-press, and, as Isaias expresses it in another text : *The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity*—(Is. liii. 10).

Saturday—Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

VI.—THE HOLY DEATH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

The death of Mary is now at hand. Divine Love, with its vehement and blessed flames, had almost entirely consumed her, and the heavenly phoenix is already losing her life in the midst of this fire. Wrapped in the flames of Divine love, and in the midst of her sighs of love, Mary gave a last sigh of still more ardent love of God, and breathing forth her soul, expired.

1.

The death of Mary is now at hand; Divine love, with its vehement and blessed flames, had already almost entirely consumed the vital spirits; the heavenly phoenix is already losing her life in the midst of this fire. Then the host of Angels come in choirs to meet her, as if to be ready for the great triumph with which they were to accompany her to Paradise. Mary was indeed consoled at the sight of these holy spirits, but was not fully consoled; for she did not yet see her beloved Jesus, Who was the whole love of her heart. Hence she often repeated to the Angels who descended to salute her: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love* —(Cant. v. 8). Holy Angels, O fair citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, you come in choirs kindly to console me; and you all console me with your sweet pres-

ence. I thank you; but you do not fully satisfy me, for as yet I do not see my Son coming to console me. Go, if you love me, return to Paradise, and on my part tell my Beloved that *I languish with love*. Tell Him to come, and to come quickly, for I am dying with the vehemence of my desire to see Him.

But, behold, Jesus is now come to take His Mother to the Kingdom of the Blessed. It was revealed to St. Elizabeth that her Son appeared to Mary before she expired with His Cross in His hands, to show the special glory he had obtained by the Redemption; having, by His death, made acquisition of that great creature, who for all eternity was to honour Him more than all men and Angels. St. John Damascene relates that our Lord Himself gave her the Viaticum, saying with tender love: "Receive, O my Mother, from my hands that same Body that thou gavest to Me." And the Mother, having received with the greatest love that last Communion, with her last breath said: "My Son, into Thy hands do I commend my spirit. I commend to Thee this soul, which from the beginning Thou didst create rich in so many graces, and by a singular privilege didst preserve from the stain of original sin. I commend to Thee my body, from which Thou didst deign to take Thy flesh and blood. I also commend to Thee these my beloved children [speaking of the holy disciples, who surrounded her]; they are grieved at my departure. Do Thou, Who lovest them more than I do, console them; bless them, and give them strength to do great things for Thy glory."

II.

The life of Mary is now closing. The most delicious music, as St. Jerome relates, was heard in the apartment where she lay; and, according to a revelation of St. Bridget, the room was filled with a brilliant light. The sweet music, and the unaccustomed splendour, warned the holy Apostles that Mary was then departing. This caused them again to burst forth in tears and prayers; and raising their hands, with one voice they exclaimed: "O

Mother, thou already goest to Heaven! Thou leavest us! Give us thy last blessing, and never forget us miserable creatures!" Mary, turning her eyes around upon all, as if to bid them a last farewell, said: "Adieu, my children; I bless you; fear not, I will never forget you." And now death came; not indeed clothed in mourning and grief, as it does to others, but adorned with light and gladness. But what do we say? Why speak of death? Let us rather say that Divine love came, and cut the thread of that noble life. And as a light, before going out, gives a last and brighter flash than ever, so did this beautiful creature, on hearing her Son's invitation to follow Him, wrapped in the flames of love, and in the midst of her loving sighs, give a last sigh of still more ardent love, and breathing forth her soul, expired. Thus was that great soul, that beautiful dove of the Lord, loosened from the bands of this life; thus did she enter into the glory of the Blessed, where she is now throned, and will be throned, Queen of Paradise, for all eternity.

Mary, then has left this world; she is now in Heaven. Thence does this compassionate Mother look down upon us who are still in this valley of tears. She pities us, and, if we wish it, promises to help us. Let us always beseech her by the merits of her blessed death, to obtain us a happy death; and should such be the pleasure of God, let us beg her to obtain us the grace to die on a Saturday, which is a day dedicated in her honour, or on a day of a Novena, or within the Octave of one of her Feasts; for this she has obtained for so many of her clients, and especially for St. Stanislaus Kostka, for whom she obtained that he should die on the Feast of her Assumption.

O sweetest Lady and Mother, thou hast already left the earth and reached thy kingdom, where, as Queen, thou art enthroned above all the choirs of Angels, as the Church sings: *She is exalted above the choirs of Angels to the celestial kingdom.* We well know that we sinners are not worthy to possess thee in this valley of darkness; but we also know that thou, in thy greatness, hast never

forgotten us miserable creatures, and that by being exalted to so great glory thou hast never lost compassion for us poor children of Adam; nay, even that it is increased in thee. From the high throne, then, to which thou art exalted, turn thy compassionate eyes upon us, and pity us. Remember, also, that in leaving this world thou didst promise not to forget us. Behold us and succour us! See in the midst of what tempests and dangers we constantly are, and shall be until the end of our lives. By the merits of thy happy death obtain us holy perseverance in the Divine friendship, that we may finally quit this life in God's grace; and thus we also shall one day come to kiss thy feet in Paradise, and unite with the blessed Spirits in praising thee and singing thy glories as thou deservest. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE.

7.—THE GREATNESS OF MARY'S POWER TO DEFEND US WHEN TEMPTED

It is said in the Old Testament that God guided His people from Egypt to the Land of Promise, *by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire*—(Exod. xiii. 21). This stupendous pillar, at one time as a cloud, at another as fire, says Richard of St. Laurence, was a figure of Mary fulfilling the double office she constantly exercises for our good : as a cloud she protects us from the ardour of Divine justice; and as fire she protects us from the devils. "Behold the twofold object for which Mary is given to us; as a cloud, to shelter us from the heat of the sun of justice, and, as fire, to protect us all against the devil." She protects us as a burning fire : for, St. Bonaventure remarks : "As wax melts before the fire, so do the devils lose their power against those

souls who often remember the name of Mary, and devoutly invoke it; and still more so, if they also endeavour to imitate her virtues."

The devils tremble even if they only hear the name of Mary. St. Bernard declares that in "the name of Mary every knee bows; and that the devils not only fear but tremble at the very sound of that name." And as men fall prostrate with fear if a thunderbolt falls near them, so do the devils if they hear the name of Mary. Thomas à Kempis thus expresses the same sentiment: "The evil spirits greatly fear the Queen of Heaven, and fly at the sound of her name, as if from fire. At the very sound of the word *Mary*, they are prostrated as by thunder."

Oh, how many victories have the clients of Mary gained by only making use of her most holy name! It was thus that St. Anthony of Padua was always victorious; thus the Blessed Henry Suso; thus so many other lovers of this great Queen have conquered. We learn from the history of the missions in Japan, that many devils appeared under the form of fierce animals to a certain Christian, to alarm and threaten him; but he thus addressed them: "I have no arms that you can fear; and if the Most High permits it, do whatever you please with me. In the meantime, however, I take the holy Names of Jesus and Mary for my defence." At the very sound of these tremendous names, the earth opened, and the proud spirits cast themselves headlong into it. St. Anselm declares that he himself "knew and had seen and heard many who had invoked the name of Mary in time of danger, and were immediately delivered."

"Glorious, indeed, and admirable," exclaims St. Bonaventure, "is thy name, O Mary; for those who pronounce it at death need not fear all the powers of hell"; for the devils on hearing that name instantly fly, and leave the soul in peace. The same Saint adds that "men do not fear a powerful hostile army as much as the powers of hell fear the name and protection of Mary." "Thou, O Lady," says St. Germanus, "by the simple invocation of thy most powerful name, givest

security to thy servants against all the assaults of the enemy." Oh, were Christians but careful in their temptations to pronounce the name of Mary with confidence, never would they fall; for, as Blessed Allan remarks: "At the very sound of these words, *Hail Mary!* Satan flies, and hell trembles." Our Blessed Lady herself revealed to St. Bridget that the enemy flies even from the most abandoned sinners, and who consequently are the farthest from God, and fully possessed by the devil, if they only invoke her most powerful name with a true purpose of amendment. "All devils on hearing this name of Mary, filled with terror, leave the soul." But at the same time our Blessed Lady added that "if the soul does not amend and wipe out its sins by sorrow, the devils almost immediately return and continue to possess it."

In Reichersperg, in Bavaria, there was a Canon Regular of the name of Arnold, surnamed the Pious on account of the sanctity of his life, who had the most tender devotion to our Blessed Lady. When at the point of death, and having received the last Sacraments, he summoned his Religious brethren, and begged that they would not abandon him in his last passage. Scarcely had he uttered these words, when, in the presence of all, he began to tremble, to roll his eyes, and, bathed in a cold sweat, with a faltering voice, he said: "Ah, do you not see the devils who are endeavouring to drag me to hell?" He then cried out, "Brothers, implore the aid of Mary for me; in her I confide; she will give me the victory." On hearing this his brethren recited the Litany of our Blessed Lady, and as they said "Holy Mary, pray for him," the dying man exclaimed, "Repeat, repeat the name of Mary, for I am already before God's tribunal." He was silent for a moment, and then added, "It is true that I did that, but I have done penance for it." And then turning to our Blessed Lady, he said: "O Mary, I shall be delivered if thou helpest me." Again the devils attacked him; but he defended himself with his Crucifix and the name of Mary. Thus was the night spent; but no sooner did morning dawn than

Arnold exclaimed with the greatest calmness, and full of holy joy : " Mary, my sovereign Lady, my refuge, has obtained me pardon and salvation." Then casting his eyes on that Blessed Virgin who was inviting him to follow her, he said : " I come, O Lady, I come !" and making an effort to do so even with his body, his soul fled after her to the realms of eternal bliss, as we trust, for he sweetly expired.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

And now behold this Lord, Who was fairest among men, appears on Calvary, His form so disfigured by torments, that it struck horror into all who saw it. Yet this deformity makes Him seem more beautiful in the eyes of souls that love Him, because these Wounds, these marks of the scourging, this lacerated flesh, are all tokens and proofs of the love He bears them; upon which the poet Petrucci beautifully sings, " O Lord, if Thou sufferest scourgings for us, to the souls who love Thee, the more deformed Thou art the more fair dost Thou appear."

St. Augustine says : " He hung in deformity upon the Cross, but His deformity has made us beautiful." And truly so, because this deformity of Jesus crucified was the cause of the beauty of our souls, which, when they were deformed, were washed with His Divine Blood, and became fair and lovely, according to what St. John wrote : *Who are these that are clothed in white garments? These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*—(Apoc. vii. 13, 14). All the Saints, as being children of Adam, were (with

the exception of the Blessed Virgin), at one time covered with a foul garment, and soiled with Adam's sin and with their own; but being washed with the Blood of the Lamb, they became white and agreeable in the sight of God.

II.

Well, didst Thou say, then, O my Jesus, that, when Thou shouldst be lifted up upon the Cross, Thou wouldst draw everything unto Thee—(Jo. xii. 32); *and this he said, signifying by what death he should die.* Truly Thou hast left nothing undone to draw all hearts unto Thee. Many are the happy souls who, on seeing Thee crucified and dying for love of them, have abandoned everything—possessions, dignities, country, and kindred, even to the embracing of torments and death—in order to give themselves wholly to Thee. Unhappy they who resist the graces Thou hast gained for them with Thy great labours and sorrows. O my God, this will be their great torment in hell, to think that they have lost a God Who, to draw them to love Him, gave His life upon a Cross; that of their own choice they have perished, and that there will be no remedy for their ruin through all eternity! O my Redeemer, I have already deserved to perish through the sins I have committed against Thee. Alas, how often have I resisted Thy grace, which sought to draw me unto Thee, and, in order to cleave to my own inclinations, have despised Thy love, and turned my back upon Thee! Oh that I had died before I had offended Thee! Oh that I had always loved Thee! I thank Thee, O my Love, that Thou hast borne with me with so much patience, and that, instead of abandoning me, as I deserved, Thou hast repeated Thy invitations, and increased Thy lights and Thy loving impulses. *I will sing the mercies of the Lord forever*—(Ps. lxxxviii. 2). Oh, cease not, my Saviour and my Hope, to continue to draw me, and to multiply Thy graces upon me, that I may love Thee in Heaven with more fervour, remembering the many mercies Thou hast shown me, after all my offences against Thee. I hope for all, through that pre-

cious Blood Thou hast shed for me, and that bitter death Thou hast endured for me.

O holy Virgin Mary, protect me; pray to Jesus for me.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

VII.—THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY INTO HEAVEN.

It would seem that, on the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into Heaven, the holy Church should invite us to mourn rather than rejoice, since our dear Mother has quitted this world and left us deprived of her sweet presence. But no: the holy Church rightly invites us to rejoice, for Mary is going to possess a kingdom and to be crowned Queen of Heaven. Let us therefore rejoice in the glorious triumph of our Mother.

I.

It would seem that on the day of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven the holy Church should rather invite us to mourn than to rejoice, since our sweet Mother has quitted this world and left us deprived of her sweet presence. St. Bernard says "It seems that we should rather weep than rejoice." But no; the holy Church invites us to rejoice: "Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating a Festival in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary." And justly so; for, if we love our Mother, we

ought to congratulate ourselves more upon her glory than on our own personal happiness. What son does not rejoice, though on account of it he has to be separated from his mother, if he knows that she is going to take possession of a kingdom? Mary is to be crowned Queen of Heaven; and shall we not keep it a festival and rejoice if we truly love her? Let us rejoice, then; let us all rejoice! And that we may rejoice, and be consoled the more by her exaltation, let us consider how glorious was the triumph of Mary when she ascended to Heaven.

After Jesus Christ our Saviour had completed, by His death, the work of Redemption, the Angels ardently desired to possess Him in their heavenly country; hence they were continually supplicating Him in the words of David: *Arise, O Lord, into thy resting-place, thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified*—(Ps. cxxxi. 8). Come, O Lord, come quickly, now that Thou hast redeemed men; come to Thy kingdom and dwell with us, and bring with Thee the living ark of Thy sanctification, Thy Mother, who was the ark Thou didst sanctify by dwelling in her womb. Precisely thus does St. Bernardine make the Angels say: "Let Mary, Thy most holy Mother, sanctified by Thy conception, also ascend." Our Lord was at last pleased to satisfy the desire of these heavenly citizens by calling Mary to Paradise. But if it was His will that the ark of the old dispensation should be brought with great pomp into the city of David—*And David and all the house of Israel brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord with joyful shouting, and with sound of trumpet*—(2 Kings vi. 15)—with how much greater and more glorious pomp did He ordain that His Mother should enter Heaven!

II.

The Prophet Elias was carried to Heaven in a fiery chariot, which, according to interpreters, was no other than a group of Angels who bore him off from the earth. "But to conduct thee to Heaven, O Mother of God," says the Abbot Rupert, "a fiery chariot was not enough;

the whole court of Heaven, headed by its King thy Son, went forth to meet and accompany thee."

St. Bernardine of Sienna says, that "Jesus," to honour the triumph of His most sweet Mother, "went forth in His glory to meet and accompany her." St. Anselm also says, that "it was precisely for this purpose that the Redeemer was pleased to ascend to Heaven before His Mother; that is, He did so, not only to prepare a throne for her in that kingdom, but also that He might Himself accompany her with all the blessed Spirits, and thus render her entry into Heaven more glorious, and such as became one who was His Mother." St. Peter Damian, contemplating the splendour of this Assumption of Mary into Heaven, says that "we shall find it more glorious than the Ascension of Jesus Christ; for to meet the Redeemer, Angels only went forth; but when the Blessed Virgin was assumed to glory, she was met and accompanied by the Lord of glory Himself, and by the whole blessed company of Saints and Angels." For this reason the Abbot Guerric supposes the Divine Word thus speaking: "To honour the Father, I descended from Heaven; to honour My Mother, I reascended there": that thus I might be enabled to go forth to meet her, and myself accompany her to Paradise.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING, IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS!

1.—THE NECESSITY OF MARY'S INTERCESSION FOR OUR SALVATION.

That it is not only lawful but useful to invoke and pray to the Saints, and more especially to the Queen of Saints, the most holy and ever blessed Virgin Mary, in order that they may obtain us Divine grace, is an Article of Faith, and has been defined by General

Councils, against heretics who condemned it as injurious to Jesus Christ, Who is our only Mediator. But if a Jeremias after his death prayed for Jerusalem—(2 Mach. xv. 14); if the Ancients of the Apocalypse presented the prayers of the Saints to God—(Apoc. v. 8); if a St. Peter promises his disciples that after his death He will be mindful of them—(2 Pet. i. 15); if a holy Stephen prays for his persecutors—(Acts vii. 59); if a St. Paul prays for his companions—(Acts xxvii. 24; Eph. ii. 16; Phil. i. 4; Col. i. 3); if, in fine, the Saints can pray for us, why cannot we beseech the Saints to intercede for us? St. Paul recommends himself to the prayers of his disciples: *Brethren, pray for us*—(1 Thess. v. 25). St. James exhorts us to pray one for another: *Pray one for another, that you may be saved*—(James v. 16). Then we can do the same.

No one denies that Jesus Christ is our only Mediator of justice, and that He by His merits has obtained our reconciliation with God. But, on the other hand, it is impious to assert that God is not pleased to grant graces at the intercession of His Saints, and more especially of Mary, His Mother, whom Jesus desires so much to see loved and honoured by all. Who can pretend that the honour bestowed on a mother does not redound to the honour of the son? *The glory of children are their fathers*—(Prov. xvii. 6). Whence St. Bernard says: "Let us not imagine that we obscure the glory of the Son by the great praise we lavish on the Mother; for the more she is honoured, the greater is the glory of her Son." "There can be no doubt," says the Saint, "that whatever we say in praise of the Mother is equally in praise of the Son." And St. Ildephonsus also says: "That which is given to the Mother redounds to the Son; the honour given to the Queen is honour bestowed on the King." There can be no doubt that by the merits of Jesus, Mary was made the mediatress of our salvation; not indeed a mediatress of justice, but of grace and intercession; as St. Bonaventure expressly calls her, "Mary, the most faithful mediatress of our salvation." And St. Laurence Justinian asks—"How can she be other-

wise than full of grace, who has been made the ladder to Paradise, the gate of Heaven, the most true mediatress between God and man?"

Hence the learned Suarez justly remarks that if we implore our Blessed Lady to obtain us a favour, it is not because we distrust the Divine mercy, but rather that we fear our own unworthiness and the absence of proper dispositions; and we recommend ourselves to Mary, that her dignity may supply for our lowliness. He says that we apply to Mary "in order that the dignity of the intercessor may supply for our misery. Hence, to invoke the aid of the most Blessed Virgin is not diffidence in the Divine mercy, but dread of our own unworthiness."

That it is most useful and holy to have recourse to the intercession of Mary can only be doubted by those who have not the Faith. But that which we intend to prove here is that the intercession of Mary is even necessary to salvation; we say necessary—not absolutely, but morally. This necessity proceeds from the will itself of God, that all the graces He dispenses should pass through the hands of Mary, according to the opinion of St. Bernard, and which we may now with safety call the general opinion of Theologians and learned men. The author of the *Reign of Mary* positively asserts that such is the case. It is maintained by Vega, Mendoza, Paciucchelli, Segneri, Poiré, Crasset, and by innumerable other learned authors. Even Father Natalis Alexander, who always uses so much reserve in his propositions, even he says that it is the will of God that we should expect all graces through the intercession of Mary. I will give his own words: "God wills that we should obtain all good things that we hope for from Him through the powerful intercession of the Virgin Mother, and we shall obtain them whenever (as we are in duty bound) we invoke her." In confirmation of this, he quotes the following celebrated passage of St. Bernard: "Such is God's will, that we should have all through Mary." Father Contenson is also of the same opinion; for, explaining the words addressed by our Lord on the Cross to St. John: *Behold thy Mother!*—(Jo. xix. 27) he

says : It is the same thing as if Jesus had said : As no one can be saved except through the merits of My sufferings and death, so no one will be a partaker of the Blood then shed otherwise than through the prayer of My Mother. He alone is a son of My sorrows who has Mary for his Mother. My Wounds are ever-flowing fountains of grace; but their streams will reach no one but by the channel of Mary. In vain will he invoke Me as a Father who has not venerated Mary as a Mother. And thou, My disciple John, if thou lovest Me, love her; for thou wilt be beloved by Me in proportion to thy love for her.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Jesus upon the Cross was a spectacle which filled Heaven and earth with amazement—the sight of an Almighty God, the Lord of all, dying upon an infamous gibbet, condemned as a malefactor between two thieves. It was a spectacle of justice—the Eternal Father, in order that His justice might be satisfied, punishing the sins of men in the person of His only-begotten Son Who was loved by Him as Himself. It was a spectacle of mercy, when His innocent Son died a death so shameful and so bitter, in order to save His creatures from the punishment that was due to them. Especially was it a display of love, in a God offering His life to redeem from death His slaves and enemies !

It is this spectacle which ever was, and ever will be, the dearest object of the contemplation of the Saints, who have counted it little to strip themselves of all earthly pleasures and goods, and to embrace with desire and joy both pain and death, in order to make some return of gratitude to a God Who died for love of them.

Comforted by the sight of Jesus derided upon the Cross, the Saints have loved contempt more than worldly people have loved the honours of the world. At the sight of Jesus naked and dying upon the Cross, they have sought to abandon all the good things of this earth. At the sight of Him all wounded upon the Cross, while the blood flowed forth from all His limbs, they have learnt to abhor sensual pleasures, and have sought to afflict their flesh as much as they could, in order to accompany with their own sufferings the sufferings of the Crucified. At the sight of the obedience and conformity of will practised by Jesus Christ to the will of His Father, they laboured to conquer all those appetites which were not conformed to the Divine pleasure; while many, though occupied in works of piety, yet, knowing that to be deprived of their own will was their most welcome sacrifice to the Heart of God, entered into some Religious Order, to lead a life of obedience, and subject their own will to that of others. At the sight of the patience of Jesus Christ, in being willing to suffer so many pains and insults for the love of us, they received with satisfaction and joy injuries, infirmities, persecutions, and the torments of tyrants. At the sight of the love Jesus Christ has shown to us in sacrificing to God His life upon the Cross for us, they sacrificed to Jesus Christ all they possessed,—their property, their pleasures, their honours, and their life.

II.

How is it that so many Christians, although they know by Faith that Jesus Christ died for love of them, instead of devoting themselves wholly to love and serve Him, give themselves up to offending and despising Him for the sake of brief and miserable pleasures? Whence comes this ingratitude? It comes from forgetfulness of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. And, O my God, what will be their remorse and shame at the Day of Judgment, when the Lord shall reproach them with all that He has done and suffered for them?

Let us, then, never cease, O devout souls, to keep

before our eyes Jesus crucified, and dying in the midst of torments and insults through love of us. From the Passion of Jesus Christ all the Saints have drawn those flames of love which made them forget all the good things of this world, and even their own selves, to give themselves up wholly to love and please this Divine Saviour, Who has so loved men that it seems as if He could not have done more in order to be loved by them. In a word, the Cross, that is, the Passion of Jesus Christ, is that which will gain for us the victory over all our passions, and over all the temptations that hell will hold out to us, in order to separate us from God. The Cross is the road and ladder by which we mount to Heaven. Happy he who embraces it during his life, and does not put it off till the hour of death. He that dies embracing the Cross has that sure pledge of eternal life which is promised to all those who follow Jesus Christ.

O my crucified Jesus, to make Thyself loved by men Thou hast spared nothing; Thou hast even given Thy life in a most painful death; how, then, can men who love their kindred, their friends, and even animals from whom they receive any token of affection, be so ungrateful to Thee as to despise Thy grace and Thy love, for the sake of miserable and vain delights! Oh, wretched me, I am one of those ungrateful beings who, for things of no worth, have renounced Thy friendship, and have turned my back upon Thee. I have deserved that Thou shouldst drive me from Thy face, as I have often banished Thee from my heart. But I know that Thou dost not cease to ask my heart of me: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*—(Deut. vi. 5). Yea, O my Jesus, as Thou desirest that I should love Thee and offerest me pardon, I renounce all creatures, and henceforth I desire to love Thee alone, my Creator and my Redeemer. Thou dost deserve to be the only object of my soul's love.

O Mary, Mother of God, refuge of sinners, pray for me; obtain for me the grace to love God, and I ask for nothing more.

Monday—Twelfth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

VIII.—THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY INTO HEAVEN.

Let us consider how Jesus Christ came forth from Heaven to meet His Mother. On first meeting her, and to console her, He said : *Arise! Make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come, for winter is now past*—(Cant. ii. 10, 11). Come, My dearest Mother, My pure and beautiful dove ! Leave the valley of tears in which for My love, thou hast suffered so much ! *Thou shalt be crowned.*

1.

Let us consider how Jesus Christ came forth from Heaven to meet His Mother. On first meeting her, and to console her, He said : *Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come, for winter is now past*—(Cant. ii. 10, 11). Come, My own dear Mother, My pure and beautiful dove; leave that valley of tears, in which, for My love, thou hast suffered so much. *Come from Libanus, my Spouse; come from Libanus, come : thou shalt be crowned*—(Cant. iv. 8). Come, soul and body, to enjoy the recompense of thy holy life. If thy sufferings have been great on earth, far greater is the glory I have prepared for thee in Heaven. Enter, then, that kingdom, and take thy seat near me. Come to receive that crown which I will bestow upon thee as Queen of the Universe. Behold, Mary already leaves the earth, at which she looks with affection and compassion :

with affection, remembering the many graces she had there received from her Lord; and with affection and compassion, because in it she leaves so many poor children surrounded with miseries and dangers. But see, Jesus offers her His hand, and the Blessed Mother already ascends; already she has passed beyond the clouds, beyond the spheres. Behold her already at the gates of Heaven. When monarchs make their solemn entry into the capital of their kingdom, they do not pass through the gates, for they are removed to make way for them on this occasion. Hence, when Jesus Christ entered Paradise, the Angels cried out: *Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates; and the King of glory shall enter in*— (Ps. xxiii. 7). Thus also, now that Mary goes to take possession of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Angels who accompany her cry out to those within: "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates; and the Queen of glory shall enter in."

II.

Behold, Mary already enters that blessed country. But on her entrance the celestial Spirits, seeing her so beautiful and glorious, ask the Angels without the gates, as Origen supposes it, with united voices of exultation: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved?*—(Cant. viii. 5). And who can this creature so beautiful be, that comes from the desert of the earth—a place of thorns and tribulation? But this one comes pure and rich in virtue, leaning on her beloved Lord, Who is graciously pleased Himself to accompany her with so great honour. Who is she? The Angels accompanying her answer: "She is the Mother of our King; she is our Queen, and the Blessed one among women; full of grace, the Saint of Saints, the beloved of God, the Immaculate one, the dove, the fairest of all creatures." Then all the blessed Spirits begin to bless and praise her; singing with far more reason than the Hebrews did to Judith: *Thou art the glory of*

Jerusalem; thou art the joy of Israel; thou art the honour of our people—(Judith xv. 10). Ah, our Lady and our Queen, thou, then, art the glory of Paradise, the joy of our country; thou art the honour of us all: be thou ever welcome, be thou ever blessed! Behold thy kingdom; behold us also, who are thy servants, ever ready to obey thy commands!

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING, IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS!

2.—THE NECESSITY OF MARY'S INTERCESSION FOR OUR SALVATION.

This proposition—that all we receive from our Lord comes through Mary—does not exactly please a certain modern writer,* who, although in other respects he speaks of true and false devotion with much learning and piety, yet when he treats of devotion towards the Divine Mother, seems to grudge her that glory which was given her without scruple by a St. Germanus, a St. Anselm, a St. John Damascene, a St. Bonaventure, a St. Antoninus, a St. Bernardine, the Venerable Abbot of Celles, and so many other learned men, who had no difficulty in affirming that the intercession of Mary is not only useful but necessary. This same author says that the proposition that God grants no grace otherwise than through Mary is hyperbolical and exaggerated, having dropped from the lips of some Saints in the heat of fervour, but which, correctly speaking, is only to be understood as meaning that through Mary we received Jesus Christ, by whose merits we obtain all graces; for he adds: "To believe that God can grant us no graces without the intercession of Mary would be contrary to the Faith and the

* This was the celebrated Muratori.—ED.

doctrine of St. Paul, who says that we acknowledge *there is one God and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus*—(1 Tim. ii. 5).

But with his leave, and going upon his own admissions, *mediation of justice* by way of merit is one thing, and *mediation by grace* by way of prayer is another. And again, it is one thing to say that God *cannot*, and another that He *will not*, grant graces without the intercession of Mary. We willingly admit that God is the Source of every good, and the absolute Master of all graces; and that Mary is only a pure creature, who receives whatever she obtains as a pure favour from God. But who can ever deny that it is most reasonable and proper to assert that God, in order to exalt this great creature, who more than all others honoured and loved Him during her life, and whom, moreover, He had chosen to be the Mother of His Son, our common Redeemer, wills that all graces that are granted to those whom He has redeemed should pass through and be dispensed by the hands of Mary? We most readily admit that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator of justice, according to the distinction just made, and that by His merits He obtains us all graces and salvation; but we say that Mary is the Mediatress of grace; and that receiving all she obtains through Jesus Christ, and because she prays and asks for it in the Name of Jesus Christ, yet all the same whatever graces we receive come to us through her intercession.

There is certainly nothing contrary to Faith in this, but the reverse. It is quite in accordance with the sentiments of the Church, which, in its public and approved prayers, teaches us continually to have recourse to this Divine Mother, and to invoke her as the "health of the weak, the refuge of sinners, the help of Christians, and as our life and hope." In the Office appointed to be said on the Feasts of Mary, this same holy Church, applying the words of Ecclesiasticus to this Blessed Virgin, gives us to understand that in her we find all hope. *In me is all hope of life and of virtue!*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 25). In Mary is every grace. *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 25). In Mary, finally, we find

life and eternal salvation : *He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord*—(Prov. viii. 35). And elsewhere : *They that work by me shall not sin ; they that explain me shall have life everlasting* —(Ecclus. xxiv. 30, 31). And surely such expressions as these sufficiently prove that we require the intercession of Mary.

Moreover, we are confirmed in this opinion by so many Theologians and Fathers, of whom it is certainly incorrect to say, as the above-named author does, that, in exalting Mary, they spoke hyperbolically and allowed great exaggerations to fall from their lips. To exaggerate and speak hyperbolically is to exceed the limits of truth ; and surely we cannot say that Saints who were animated by the Spirit of God, which is Truth itself, spoke thus. If I may be allowed to make a short digression and give my own sentiment, it is, that when an opinion tends in any way to the honour of the most Blessed Virgin, when it has some foundation, and is not repugnant to the Faith, nor to the decrees of the Church, nor to truth, the refusal to hold it, or to oppose it because the reverse *may* be true, shows little devotion to the Mother of God. Of the number of such as these I do not choose to be, nor do I wish my reader to be, but rather of the number of those who fully and firmly believe all that can without error be believed of the greatness of Mary, according to the Abbot Rupert, who, amongst the acts of homage most pleasing to this good Mother, places that of firmly believing all that redounds to her honour. If there was nothing else to take away our fear of exceeding in the praises of Mary, St. Augustine should suffice ; for he declares that whatever we may say in praise of Mary is little in comparison with that which she deserves on account of her dignity of Mother of God ; and, moreover, the Church says, in the Mass appointed for her Festivals : "Thou art happy, O sacred Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise."

But let us return to the point, and examine what the Saints say on the subject. St. Bernard says that "God has filled Mary with all graces, so that men may receive

by her means, as by a channel, every good thing that comes to them." He says that "she is a full aqueduct, that others may receive of her plenitude." On this the Saint makes the following significant remark: "Before the birth of the Blessed Virgin, a constant flow of graces was wanting, because this aqueduct did not exist." But now that Mary has been given to the world, heavenly graces constantly flow through her on all.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Pride was the cause of the sin of Adam, and, consequently, of the ruin of the human race. On this account Jesus Christ came to repair this ruin by His own humiliation, not refusing to embrace the shame of all the insults His enemies offered Him, as He had Himself predicted by David: *Because for thy sake I have borne reproach, confusion hath covered my face*—(Ps. lxviii. 8). The whole life of our Redeemer was filled with shame and insults which He received from men; and He did not refuse to accept them, even to the extent of death itself, in order to deliver us from eternal shame: *Who, having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame*—(Heb. xii. 2).

O God, who would not mourn for Jesus, and who would not love Him, if he would but consider what He suffered for the three hours during which His crucifixion lasted and in His agony upon the Cross? All His limbs were stricken and tormented, and one could not relieve the other. The afflicted Lord on that bed of pain could not move, being fastened with nails in His hands and feet; all His most sacred flesh was full of wounds, while

the wounds of His hands and feet were most painful, and were compelled to sustain His whole body; so that wheresoever He rested upon that Cross, whether on His hands or His feet, there His pains increased. It may be truly said that in those three hours of agony Jesus suffered as many deaths as He passed moments upon the Cross. O innocent Lamb Who hast suffered such things for me, have mercy upon me! Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me!

Yet these outward pains of the body were the least bitter; the inward pains of the soul were far greater. His blessed soul was all desolate, and deprived of every drop of consolation and sensible relief; all was weariness, sorrow, and affliction. This He uttered in the words: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*—(Matt. xxvii. 46). Drowned in this sea of inward and outward grief, our Saviour, so worthy of our love, thought fit to end His life, as He had foretold by the mouth of David: *I am come into the depths of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me*—(Ps. lxviii. 3).

II.

Behold, at the very time that Jesus was in agony upon the Cross, and was drawing near to death, all they who stood near Him, priests, scribes, elders, and soldiers, never ceased adding to His pangs with insults and mockeries. St. Matthew writes: *They that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads*—(Matt. xxvii. 39). This was already prophesied by David, when he wrote, speaking in the person of Christ: *All they that saw me reviled me, they spoke with their lips, and wagged their head*—(Ps. xxi. 8).

They who passed before Him said: *Vah! Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross*—(Matt. xxvii. 40). Thou hast boasted, they said, that Thou wouldst destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Yet Jesus had not said that He could destroy the material temple and raise it again

in three days; but He had said: *Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again*—(Jo. ii. 19). With these words He indeed intended to express His own power; but He really (as Euthymius and others explain it) spoke allegorically, foretelling that, through the act of the Jews, His soul would be one day separated from His body, but that in three days it would rise again.

They said: *Save thyself.* O ungrateful men! If this great Son of God when He was made Man, had chosen to save Himself, He would not voluntarily have chosen death.

If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross —(Matt. xxvii. 40); yet, if Jesus had come down, He would not have accomplished our Redemption by His death. We could not have been delivered from eternal death. "He would not come down," says St. Ambrose, "lest when He came down, I should die." Theophylact writes, that they who said this spoke by the instigation of the devil who sought to hinder our salvation which Jesus was about to accomplish by means of the Cross. And he adds that the Lord would not have ascended the Cross had He been willing to descend from it without accomplishing our Redemption. St. John Chrysostom also says that the Jews uttered this insult in order that Jesus might die insulted as an impostor in the sight of all men, and be proved unable to deliver Himself from the Cross, after He had boasted that He was the Son of God.

St. John Chrysostom remarks that the Jews ignorantly said: *If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross;* for if Jesus had come down from the Cross before He had died, He would not have been that Son of God Who was promised, and Who was to save us by His death. On this account, says the Saint, He did not come down from the Cross until He was dead, because He had come down from Heaven for the very purpose of giving His life for our salvation. St. Athanasius makes the same remark, saying that our Redeemer chose to be known as the true Son of God, not by coming down from the Cross, but by remaining upon it till He was dead. And thus it was foretold by the Prophets that our Redeemer

must be crucified and die, as St. Paul wrote : *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written : Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*—(Gal. iii. 13).

Tuesday—Twelfth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

IX.—THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY INTO HEAVEN.

Consider how all the Saints in Paradise welcomed holy Mary on her entrance into Heaven, and saluted her as their Queen. And the Three Divine Persons, placing her throne on the right of that of Jesus, declared her Sovereign of Heaven and earth, and commanded the Angels and all creatures to acknowledge her as Queen and to serve and obey her.

I.

Consider how all the Saints then in Paradise welcomed holy Mary on her entrance into Heaven and saluted her as their Queen. All the holy Virgins came : *The daughters saw her, and declared her most blessed . . . and they praised her*—(Cant. vi. 8). " We," they said, " O most Blessed Lady, are also queens in this kingdom, but thou art our Queen; for thou wast the first to give us the great example of consecrating our virginity to God; we all bless and thank thee for it." Then came the holy

Confessors to salute her as their mistress; who, by her holy life, had taught them so many beautiful virtues. The holy Martyrs also came to salute her as their Queen; for she, by her great constancy in the sorrows of her Son's Passion, had taught them, and also by her merits had obtained them strength, to lay down their lives for the Faith. St. James, the only one of the Apostles who was yet in Heaven, also came to thank her in the name of all the other Apostles for all the comfort and help she had afforded them while she was on earth. The Prophets next came to salute her, and said: "Ah, Lady, thou wast the one foreshadowed in our prophecies." The holy Patriarchs then came and said: O Mary, it is thou who wast our hope; for thee it was that we sighed with such ardour and for so long a time." But amongst these latter came our First Parents, Adam and Eve, to thank her with the greatest affection. "Ah, beloved daughter," they said, "thou hast repaired the injury which we inflicted on the human race; thou hast obtained for the world that blessing which we lost by our crime; by thee we are saved, and for it be ever blessed."

St. Simeon then came to kiss her feet, and with joy reminded her of the day when he received the Infant Jesus from her hands. St. Zachary and St. Elizabeth also came, and again thanked her for that loving visit which, with so great humility and charity, she had paid them in their dwelling, and by which they had received such treasures of grace. St. John the Baptist came with still greater affection to thank her for having sanctified him by her voice. But how must her holy parents, St. Joachim and St. Anne, have spoken when they came to salute her! O God, with what tenderness must they have blessed her, saying: "Ah, beloved daughter, what a favour it was for us to have such a child! Be thou now our Queen; for thou art the Mother of our God, and as such we salute and worship thee."

II.

Who can ever form an idea of the affection with which her dear spouse, St. Joseph, came to salute her? Who can ever describe the joy which the holy Patriarch felt at seeing his spouse so triumphantly enter Heaven and made its Queen. With what tenderness must he have addressed her: "Ah, my Lady and spouse, how can I ever thank our God as I ought, for having made me thy spouse, thou who art His true Mother! Through thee I merited to assist on earth the childhood of the Eternal Word, to carry Him so often in my arms, and to receive so many special graces. Ever blessed be those moments which I spent in life in serving Jesus and thee, my holy spouse. Behold our Jesus! Let us rejoice that now He no longer lies on straw in a manger, as we saw Him at His birth in Bethlehem. He no longer lives poor and despised in a shop, as He once lived with us in Nazareth; He is no longer nailed to an infamous gibbet, as when He died in Jerusalem for the salvation of the world; but He is seated at the right hand of His Father, as King and Lord of Heaven and earth. And now, O my Queen, we shall never more be separated from His feet; we shall there bless Him and love Him for all eternity."

All the Angels then came to salute her; and she, the great Queen, thanked all for the assistance they had given her on earth, and more especially she thanked the Archangel Gabriel, who was the happy ambassador, the bearer of all her glories, when he came to announce to her that she was the chosen Mother of God.

The humble and holy Virgin, then kneeling, adored the Divine Majesty, and all absorbed in the consciousness of her own nothingness, thanked God for all the graces bestowed upon her by His pure goodness, and especially for having made her the Mother of the Eternal Word. And then let him who can, comprehend with what love the Most Holy Trinity blessed her! Let him comprehend the welcome given to His daughter by the Eternal Father; to His Mother by the Son; to His spouse by the Holy Ghost. The Father crowned her by imparting His

power to her; the Son, His wisdom; the Holy Ghost, His love. And the Three Divine Persons, placing her throne at the right of that of Jesus, declared her Sovereign of Heaven and earth; and commanded the Angels and all creatures to acknowledge her as their Queen, and as such to serve and obey her.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS!

3.—THE NECESSITY OF MARY'S INTERCESSION FOR OUR SALVATION.

The devil, like Holofernes, who, in order to gain possession of the city of Bethulia, ordered the aqueducts to be destroyed, exerts himself to his utmost to destroy devotion to the Mother of God in souls; for if this channel of grace is closed, he easily gains possession of them. St. Bernard says: "See, O men, with what tender devotion our Lord wills that we should honour our Queen, by always having recourse to her protection; and by relying on it; for in Mary God has placed the plenitude of every good, so that henceforward we may know and acknowledge that whatever hope, grace, or other advantage we possess, all comes from the hands of Mary." St. Antoninus says the same thing: "All graces that have ever been bestowed on men, all came through Mary." And on this account she is called the moon, according to the following remark of St. Bonaventure: "As the moon, which stands between the sun and the earth, transmits to this latter whatever it receives from the former, so does Mary pour out upon us who are in this world the heavenly graces that she receives from the Divine Sun of justice."

Again, the holy Church calls her "the happy gate

heaven"; for, as the same St. Bernard remarks: "As every mandate of grace that is sent by a king passes through the palace-gates, so does every grace that comes from Heaven to the world pass through the hands of Mary." St. Bonaventure says that Mary is called "the gate of Heaven, because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through her."

An ancient author, probably St. Sophronius, in a sermon on the Assumption, published with the works of St. Jerome, says that the plenitude of grace which is in Jesus Christ came into Mary, though in a different way; meaning that it is our Lord, as the Head, from Whom the vital spirits (that is, Divine help to obtain eternal salvation), flow into us, who are the members of His mystical body; and that the same plenitude is in Mary, as in the neck, through which these vital spirits pass to the members. The same idea is confirmed by St. Bernardine of Sienna, who explains it more clearly, saying, "that all graces of the spiritual life that descend from Christ, their Head, to the faithful, who are His mystical body, are transmitted through the instrumentality of Mary." The same St. Bernardine endeavours to assign a reason for this when he says that "as God was pleased to dwell in the womb of this holy Virgin, she acquired, so to speak, a kind of jurisdiction over all graces; for when Jesus Christ issued forth from her most sacred womb, all the streams of Divine gifts flowed from her as from a celestial ocean." Elsewhere, repeating the same idea in more distinct terms, he asserts that "from the moment that this Virgin Mother conceived the Divine Word in her womb, she acquired a special jurisdiction, so to say, over all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, so that no creature has since received any grace from God otherwise than through the hands of Mary."

Another author, in a commentary on a passage of Jeremias, in which the Prophet, speaking of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, and of Mary His Mother, says that *a woman shall compass a man*—(Jer. xxxi. 22), remarks, that "as no line can be drawn from the centre of a circle without passing through the circumference, so no grace

proceeds from Jesus, Who is the centre of every good thing, without passing through Mary, who compassed Him when she received Him into her womb."

St. Bernardine says that for this reason, "all gifts, all virtues, and all graces are dispensed by the hands of Mary to whomsoever, whensoever, and, as she pleases." Richard of St. Laurence also asserts that, "God wills that whatever good things He bestows on His creatures should pass through the hands of Mary." And therefore the Venerable Abbot of Celles exhorts all to have recourse to this "treasury of graces," as he calls her, for the world and the whole human race have to receive every good that can be hoped for through her alone. "Address yourselves to the Blessed Virgin," he says; "for by her, and in her, and with her, and from her, the world receives, and is to receive, every good."

It must now be evident to all that when these Saints and authors tell us in such terms that all graces come to us through Mary, they do not simply mean to say that we "received Jesus Christ, the source of every good, through Mary," as the before-named writer pretends; but that they assure us that God, Who gave us Jesus Christ, wills that all graces that have been, that are, and will be dispensed to men to the end of the world through the merits of Christ, should be dispensed by the hands and through the intercession of Mary.

And thus Father Suarez concludes that it is the sentiment of the universal Church that, "the intercession and prayers of Mary are, above those of all others, not only useful, but necessary." Necessary, in accordance with what we have already said, not with an absolute necessity; for the mediation of Jesus Christ alone is absolutely necessary; but with a moral necessity; for the Church believes with St. Bernard that God has determined that no grace shall be granted otherwise than by the hands of Mary. "God wills," says the Saint, "that we should have nothing that has not passed through the hands of Mary"; and before St. Bernard, St. Ildephonsus asserted the same thing, addressing the Blessed Virgin in the following terms: "O Mary, God has decided on commit-

ting all good gifts that He has provided for men to thy hands, and therefore He has entrusted all treasures and riches of grace to thee." And therefore St. Peter Damian remarks that, "God would not become man without the consent of Mary; in the first place, that we might feel ourselves under great obligations to her; and in the second, that we might understand that the salvation of all is left to the care of this Blessed Virgin."

St. Bonaventure, on the words of the Prophet Isaias, *And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him*—(Is. xi. 1, 2), makes a beautiful remark, saying: "Whoever desires the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit, let him seek for the flower of the Holy Ghost in the rod." That is, for Jesus in Mary; "For by the rod we find the flower, and by the flower, God." And in the twelfth chapter of the same work, he adds: "If you desire to possess this flower, bend down the rod, which bears the flower, by prayer; and so you will obtain it." The seraphical Father, in his sermon for the Epiphany, on the words of St. Matthew, *They found the child with Mary his mother*—(Matt. ii. 11), reminds us that if we wish to find Jesus we must go to Mary. We may, then, conclude, that in vain shall we seek for Jesus unless we endeavour to find Him with Mary. And so St. Ildephonsus says, "I desire to be the servant of the Son; but because no one will ever be so without serving the Mother, for this reason I desire the servitude of Mary."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

St. Matthew goes on to relate other insults which the Jews offered Jesus Christ : *He saved others, himself he cannot save*—(Matt. xxvii. 42).

Thus they treated Him as an impostor, by referring to the miracles wrought by Him in the restoration of the dead to life, and by treating Him as one Who was unable to save His own life.

St. Leo replies that this was not the proper hour for Jesus to display His Divine power; and that He would not hinder the Redemption of man in order to confound their blasphemies.

St. Gregory also suggests a motive why Jesus would not descend from the Cross : " If He had then come down, He would not have shown to us the virtue of patience." Of course Jesus Christ could deliver Himself from the Cross and from these insults; yet this was not the time to display His power, but rather to teach us patience in our toils, in order that we may fulfil the Divine pleasure; and therefore Jesus would not deliver Himself from death before He had fulfilled His Father's will, that we might not be deprived of this great example of patience. " Because He taught patience, He laid aside His power," says St. Augustine.

II.

The patience Jesus Christ exercised in enduring the shame of all the insults offered Him by the Jews obtained for us grace to endure with patience and peace of mind all the humiliations and persecutions of the world. Therefore St. Paul, speaking of the journey of Jesus

Christ to Calvary when He carried the Cross, thus exhorts us to accompany Him : *Let us, therefore, go forth to meet him without the camp, bearing his reproach* —(Heb. xiii. 13). The Saints, when they received injuries, did not think of revenging themselves, nor were they disturbed; they were even comforted at seeing themselves despised, as Jesus Christ was despised. Therefore let us not hesitate to embrace, for the love of Jesus Christ, the very insults that were offered to Him, since Jesus Christ suffered those insults for love of us.

O my Redeemer, for the time past I have not done this. For the future I desire to suffer everything for love of Thee : give me strength to put my desires into execution.

Wednesday—Twelfth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

X.—THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN HEAVEN.

Let us consider how exalted was the throne to which our Lady was raised in Heaven. "If the mind of man," says St. Bernard, "can never comprehend the immense glory prepared by God in Heaven for those who love Him, as St. Paul assures us, who then can ever comprehend the glory God prepared for His beloved Mother!"

1.

Let us consider how exalted was the throne to which our Lady was raised in Heaven.

" If the mind of man," says St. Bernard, " can never comprehend the immense glory prepared in Heaven by God for those who on earth have loved Him, as the Apostle tells us, who can ever comprehend the glory God prepared for His beloved Mother, who, more than all men, loved Him on earth; nay, even from the very first moment of her creation, loved Him more than all men and Angels united? Rightly, then, does the Church sing that Mary, having loved God more than all the Angels, " the Mother of God has been exalted above them all in the heavenly kingdom." *Exaltata est sancta Dei Genitrix super choros Angelorum ad coelestia regna.* Yes, she was exalted, says the abbot Guerric, above the Angels; so that she sees none above her but her Son, Who is the only-begotten of the Father.

Hence it is that the learned Gerson asserts that, as all the orders of Angels and Saints are divided into three Hierarchies, so does Mary of herself constitute a Hierarchy apart, the sublimest of all, and next to that of God. And, says St. Antoninus, as the mistress is, without comparison, above her servants, so is "Mary, who is the sovereign Lady of the Angels, exalted incomparably above the angelic hierarchies." To understand this, we need only know what David said : *The Queen stood on thy right hand*—(Ps. xliv. 10). And as an ancient author says, these words are explained as meaning that " Mary is placed at the right hand of God."

II.

It is certain, as St. Ildephonsus says, that Mary's good works incomparably surpassed in merit those of all the Saints, and therefore her reward must have surpassed theirs in the same proportion; for " as that which she bore was incomprehensible, so is the reward which she merited and received incomprehensibly greater than that of all the Saints." And since it is certain that God rewards according to merit, as the Apostle writes, *who will render to every man according to his works*—(Rom. ii. 6), it is also certain, as St. Thomas teaches, that the

Blessed Virgin, " who was equal to and even superior in merit to all men and Angels, was exalted above all the celestial orders." " In fine," adds St. Bernard, " let us measure the singular grace that she acquired on earth, and then we may measure the singular glory which she obtained in Heaven " ; for, " according to the measure of her grace on earth is the measure of her glory in the kingdom of the Blessed."

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS.

4.—THE NECESSITY OF MARY'S INTERCESSION FOR OUR SALVATION.

St. Bernard say that "as a man and a woman co-operated in our ruin, so it was proper that another man and another woman should co-operate in our Redemption, and these two were Jesus and His Mother Mary." "There is no doubt," says the Saint, "that Jesus Christ alone was more than sufficient to redeem us; but it was more becoming that both sexes should co-operate in the reparation of an evil in causing which both had shared." Hence Blessed Albert the Great calls Mary, the " helper of the redemption " : and the Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget, that " as Adam and Eve sold the world for an apple, so did she with her Son redeem it as it were with one heart." This is confirmed by St. Anselm, who says that " although God could create the world out of nothing, yet, when it was lost by sin, he would not repair the evil without the co-operation of Mary."

Suarez says that " Mary co-operated in our salvation in three ways; first, by having merited, by a merit of congruity, the Incarnation of the Word; secondly, by having continually prayed for us whilst she was living in

this world; thirdly, by having willingly sacrificed the life of her Son to God." For this reason our Lord has justly decreed, that, as Mary co-operated in the salvation of man with so much love, and at the same time gave such glory to God, so all men through her intercession are to obtain their salvation.

Mary is called "the co-operator in our justification"; for to her God has entrusted all graces intended for us; and therefore St. Bernard affirms that "all men, past, present, and to come, should look upon Mary as the means and negotiator of the salvation of all generations."

Jesus Christ says that no one can find Him unless the Eternal Father first draws him by the means of Divine grace: *No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him*—(Jo. vi. 44). Thus also does Jesus Christ address His Mother, says Richard of St. Laurence: "No one comes to Me unless My Mother first of all draw him by her prayers." Jesus was the fruit of Mary, as St. Elizabeth told her: *Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb*—(Luke i. 42). Whoever, therefore, desires the fruit must go to the tree; whoever desires Jesus must go to Mary; and whoever finds Mary will most certainly find Jesus.

When St. Elizabeth saw that the most Blessed Virgin had come to visit her in her own house, not knowing how to thank her, and filled with humility, she exclaimed: *And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?*—(Luke i. 43). But, we may ask, how could this be? Did not St. Elizabeth already know that not only Mary, but also Jesus, had entered her house? Why then does she say that she is unworthy to receive the Mother, and not, rather, that she is unworthy to receive the Son, Who had come to visit her? Ah, yes, it was because the Saint knew full well that when Mary comes she brings Jesus, and therefore it was sufficient to thank the Mother without naming the Son.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The Jews, not satisfied with the injuries and blasphemies they had offered to Jesus Christ, reproached Him with the Name of His Father, saying : *He trusted in God, let him now deliver him, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God*—(Matt. xxvii. 43). This sacrilegious expression of the Jews was already foretold by David, when he said in the Name of Christ : *All they that saw me laughed me to scorn . . . saying : He trusted in God, let him deliver him, let him save him, seeing he delighted in him*—(Ps. xxi. 8, 9). These very men who thus spoke were called bulls, dogs, and lions by David in the same Psalm : *Fat bulls have besieged me . . . Many dogs have encompassed me . . . Save me from the mouth of the lion*—(Ps. xxi.). Thus, when the Jews said : *Let him now deliver him if he will have him*—(Matt. xxvii. 43), they truly showed that they were these bulls, dogs, and lions foretold by David.

These very same blasphemies, which were one day to be spoken against the Saviour and against God, were already foretold by the Wise Man with even more exactness : *He boasteth that he hath the knowledge of God, and calleth himself the son of God . . . He glorieth that he hath God for his father . . . If he be the true son of God he will befriend him and will deliver him from the hands of his enemies . . . Let us examine him by outrages and tortures that we may know his meekness and try his patience. Let us condemn him to a most shameful death*—(Wis. ii. 13-20).

The chief priests were stirred up by envy and hatred against Jesus Christ thus to insult Him; but, at the same time, they were not exempt from the fear of some great

punishment, as they could not deny the miracles wrought by our Lord. Wherefore all the priests and chiefs of the Synagogue continued disturbed and in terror, and therefore desired to be present at His death, in order to be freed from this fear which tormented them. Seeing Him then fastened upon the Cross, and that He was not delivered from it by His Father, they proceeded with increased audacity to taunt Him with His helplessness and His saying He was the Son of God. They said: "He gloried that He had God for His Father; why, then, does not God deliver Him if He loves Him as His Son?" But these malicious men were in grievous error, for God did truly love Jesus Christ, and loved Him as His Son; and He loved Him on this very account, that Jesus was sacrificing His life upon the Cross for the salvation of men, in order to obey His Father. This Jesus Himself had said: *I lay down my life for my sheep . . . therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life* —(Jo. x. 15, 17). The Father had already destined Him to be the victim of this great sacrifice which would bring Him infinite glory—the Sacrifice of the God-man Himself —and which would ensure the salvation of all men; but if the Father had delivered Him from death, the sacrifice would have been imperfect, and then the Father would have been deprived of that glory, while men would have been deprived of their salvation.

II.

Tertullian writes that all the insults that were offered to Jesus Christ were a secret remedy for our pride; for these injuries, which were unjust, and undeserved, were nevertheless necessary for our salvation, and becoming a God Who chose to suffer so much to save man. And then, speaking of the reproaches laid against Jesus, he adds: "Of Him they were unworthy, but to us they were necessary, and, for that reason, they were worthy of God, because nothing is so worthy of God as the salvation of man."

Let us, therefore, who glory in being disciples of Jesus

Christ, be ashamed of angrily resenting the injuries we receive from men, because the God Who made us, suffered the same for our salvation with so much patience. And let us not be ashamed of imitating Jesus Christ in pardoning those who offend us, for He Himself declares, in the Day of Judgment He will be ashamed of those who in this life have been ashamed of Him.

O my Jesus, how can I grieve over any insults I may receive, who have so often deserved to be trodden under foot by the devils in hell! Oh, by the merit of all the insults which Thou didst suffer in Thy Passion, give me grace to suffer with patience all the insults which may be offered to me, through love of Thee, Who hast embraced so many for love of me. I love Thee above all things, and desire to suffer for Thee, Who hast suffered so much for me. I hope for everything from Thee, Who hast bought me with Thy Blood. And I also hope in thy intercession, O my Mother Mary.

Thursday—Twelfth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

XI.—THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN HEAVEN.

"As the splendour of the sun exceeds that of all the stars united," says St. Basil of Seleucia, "so does Mary's glory surpass that of all the Blessed in Heaven." The greatest glory of the Blessed is, after the vision of God, the presence of Heaven's most beautiful Queen.

I.

"As the splendour of the sun exceeds that of all the stars united," says St. Basil of Seleucia, "so does Mary's glory exceed that of all the blessed." St. Peter Damian adds, that "as the light of the moon and stars is so entirely eclipsed on the appearance of the sun, that it is as if it was not, so also does Mary's glory so far exceed the splendour of all men and Angels that, so to say, they do not appear in Heaven." Hence St. Bernardine of Sienna asserts, with St. Bernard, that the Blessed participate in part in the Divine glory; but that the Blessed Virgin has been, in a certain way, so greatly enriched with it, that it would seem that no creature could be more closely united with God than Mary is: "She has penetrated into the bottom of the deep, and seems immersed as deeply as it is possible for a creature in that inaccessible light." Blessed Albert the Great confirms this, saying that our Queen "contemplates the Majesty of God in incomparably closer proximity than all other creatures." St. Bernardine of Sienna, moreover, says that as the various planets are illumined by the sun, so all the Blessed receive light and an increase of happiness from the sight of Mary." And in another place he also asserts that when the glorious Virgin Mother of God ascended to Heaven, she augmented the joy of all its inhabitants. For the same reason St. Peter Damian says that the greatest glory of the Blessed in Heaven is, after the vision of God, the presence of this most beautiful Queen. And St. Bonaventure says that, "after God, our greatest glory and our greatest joy is Mary."

O great, exalted, and most glorious Lady, prostrate at the foot of thy throne we worship thee from this valley of tears. We rejoice at the immense glory with which our Lord has enriched thee; and now that thou are enthroned as Queen of Heaven and earth, ah, forget not us, thy poor servants. Disdain not, from the high throne on which thou reignest, to cast thine eyes of mercy on us miserable creatures. The nearer thou art to the source of graces, in the greater abundance canst thou

procure those graces for us. In Heaven thou seest more plainly our miseries; hence thou must compassionate and succour us the more. Make us thy faithful servants on earth, that thus we may one day bless thee in Heaven.

II.

Let us, then, rejoice with Mary that God has exalted her to so high a throne in Heaven. Let us also rejoice on our own account; for though our Mother is no longer present with us on earth, having ascended in glory to Heaven, yet in affection she is always with us. Nay, even being there nearer to God, she better knows our miseries; and her pity for us is greater, while she is better able to help us. Is it possible, O Blessed Virgin," asks St. Peter Damian, "because thou art so greatly exalted, thou hast forgotten us in our miseries? Ah, no, God forbid that we should have such a thought! So compassionate a heart cannot but pity our so great miseries." "If Mary's compassion for the miserable," says St. Bonaventure, "was great when she lived upon earth, it is far greater now that she reigns in Heaven."

Let us dedicate ourselves to the service of this Queen, to honour and love her as much as we can; for, as Richard of St. Laurence remarks, "she is not like other rulers, who oppress their vassals with burdens and taxes; but she enriches her servants with graces, merits and rewards." Let us also entreat her in the words of the Abbot Guerric: "O Mother of mercy, thou who sittest on so lofty a throne and so near to God, satiate thyself with the glory of thy Jesus, and send us, thy servants, the fragments that are left. Thou dost now enjoy the heavenly banquet of thy Lord; and we, who are still on earth, as dogs under the table, ask thy mercy."

On thy Assumption into Heaven, O Mary, when thou wast made Queen of the universe, we also consecrate ourselves to thy service. In the midst of thy so great joy console us also by accepting us as thy servants. Thou art, then, our Mother. Ah, most sweet Mother, most amiable Mother, thine altars are surrounded by many

people : some ask to be cured of sickness, some to be relieved in their necessities, some for an abundant harvest, and some for success in litigation. We ask thee for graces more pleasing to thy heart; obtain for us that we may be humble, detached from the world, resigned to the Divine will; obtain for us the holy fear of God, a good death, and Paradise. O Lady, change us from sinners into saints; work this miracle, which will redound more to thy honour than if thou didst restore sight to a thousand blind persons, or didst raise a thousand from the dead. Thou art all-powerful with God, for we know that thou art His Mother, His beloved one, His most dear one, filled with His grace. What can He ever deny thee? O most beautiful Queen, we have no claim that thou shouldst show thyself to us here on earth, but we do desire to go to see thee in Paradise; and it is thou who must obtain us this grace. For it we hope with confidence. Amen, amen.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS!

5.—THE NECESSITY OF MARY'S INTERCESSION FOR OUR SALVATION.

She is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her bread from afar—(Prov. xxxi. 14). Mary was this fortunate ship that brought us Jesus Christ from Heaven, Who is the Living Bread that comes down from Heaven to give us eternal life, as He Himself says : *I am the living bread, which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever*—(Jo. vi. 51, 52). And hence Richard of St. Laurence says that " in the sea of this world all will be lost who are not received into this ship; that is to say, all who are not protected by Mary" ;

and therefore he adds : " As often as we see ourselves in danger of perishing in the midst of the temptations and contending passions of this life, let us have recourse to Mary, and cry out quickly : *O Lady, save us, we perish!*

Remark that this writer does not scruple to address these words to Mary : " *Save us, we perish!*" as does a certain author already noticed, who asserts that we cannot ask Mary to save us, as this belongs to God alone. But since a culprit condemned to death can beg a royal favourite to save him by interceding with the king that his life may be spared, why cannot we ask the Mother of God to save us by obtaining us eternal life? St. John Damascene scrupled not to address her in these words : " Pure and immaculate Virgin, save me, and deliver me from eternal damnation." St. Bonaventure called Mary " the salvation of those who invoked her." The holy Church approves of the invocation by also calling her the " salvation of the weak." And shall we scruple to ask her to save us, when " the way of salvation is open to none otherwise than through Mary," as a certain author remarks? And before him St. Germanus had said the same thing, speaking of Mary : " No one is saved but through thee."

But let us now see what else the Saints say of the need in which we are of the intercession of the Divine Mother. The glorious St. Cajetan used to say that we may seek for graces, but shall never find them without the intercession of Mary. This is confirmed by St. Antoninus, who thus beautifully expresses himself : " Whoever asks and expects to obtain graces without the intercession of Mary endeavours to fly without wings " ; for, as Pharaoh said to Joseph : *the land of Egypt is in thy hands*, and directed all who came to him for food to go to Joseph : *Go to Joseph*—(Gen. xli. 55); so does God send us to Mary when we seek for grace : " Go to Mary " ; for " He has decreed," says St. Bernard, " that He will grant no graces otherwise than by the hands of Mary." " And thus," says Richard of St. Laurence, " our salvation is in the hands of Mary; so that we Christians may with much greater reason say to Mary than the Egyptians to

Joseph : *Our life is in thy hands*—(Gen. xlvii. 25). The venerable Raymond Jordano speaks in the same way of Mary : " Our salvation is in her hands." Cassian speaks in still stronger terms. He says absolutely, that " the salvation of all depends on their being favoured and protected by Mary." He who is protected by Mary will be saved; he who is not, will be lost. St. Bernardine of Sienna thus addresses this Blessed Virgin : " O Lady, since thou art the dispenser of all graces, and since the grace of salvation can only come through thy hands, our salvation depends on thee."

Therefore Richard of St. Laurence had good reason for saying that, " as we should fall into the abyss if the ground were withdrawn from under our feet, so does a soul deprived of the succour of Mary first fall into sin, and then into hell." St. Bonaventure says that " God will not save us without the intercession of Mary." And that " as a child cannot live without a nurse to suckle it, so no one can be saved without the protection of Mary." Therefore he exhorts us " to thirst after devotion to her, to preserve it with care, and never to abandon it until we have received her maternal blessing in Heaven." " And whoever," exclaims St. Germanus, " could know God, were it not for thee, O most holy Mary? Who could be saved? Who would be preserved from dangers? Who would receive any grace, were it not for thee, O Mother of God, O full of grace?" These are his own beautiful words : " There is no one, O most holy Mary, who can know God but through thee! No one who can be saved or redeemed but through thee, O Mother of God! No one who can be delivered from dangers but through thee, O Virgin Mother! No one who obtains mercy but through thee, O thou who art filled with all grace!" And in another place, addressing her, he says, " No one would be free from the effects of the concupiscence of the flesh and from sin, unless thou didst open the way to him."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE SOLEMN WORDS OF JESUS ON THE CROSS.

I.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do! —(Luke xxiii. 34).

O loving tenderness of Jesus towards men! St. Augustine says that when the Saviour was injured by His enemies, He besought pardon for them; for He thought, not so much of the injuries He received from them, and the death they inflicted upon Him, as upon the love which brought Him to die for them.

But some ask: Why did Jesus pray to the Father to pardon them, when He Himself could have forgiven their crimes? St. Bernard replies that He prayed to the Father, not because He could not Himself forgive them, but that He might teach us to pray for them that persecute us. The holy abbot says also in another place: "O wonderful thing! He cries: *Forgive!* They cry: *Crucify!*" Arnold of Chartres remarks that while Jesus was labouring to save the Jews, they were labouring to destroy themselves; but the love of the Son had more power with God than the blindness of that ungrateful people. St. Cyprian writes: "Even he who sheds the Blood of Christ is made to live by the Blood of Christ." Jesus Christ, in dying, had so great a desire to save all men, that He made even those enemies who shed His Blood with torments partakers of that Blood. Look, says St. Augustine, at thy God upon His Cross; see how He prays for them that crucify Him; and then deny pardon to thy brother who has offended thee!

II.

St. Leo says that it was through this prayer of Christ that so many thousands of Jews were converted by the preaching of St. Paul, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. And St. Jerome says that God did not will that the prayer of Jesus Christ should continue without effect, and therefore at the very time He caused many of the Jews to embrace the Faith. But why were they not all converted? I reply that the prayer of Jesus Christ was conditional, and that they who were converted were not of the number of those of whom it was said, *You always resist the Holy Ghost*—(Acts vii. 51).

In this prayer Jesus Christ included all sinners, so that we all may say to God :

O Eternal Father, hear the prayer of Thy beloved Son, Who prayed to Thee to pardon us. We deserve not this pardon, but Jesus Christ has merited it, Who by His death has more than abundantly satisfied for our sins. No, my God, I will not be obstinate like the Jews; I repent, O my Father, with all my heart, for having offended Thee, and through the merits of Jesus Christ I ask for pardon. And Thou, O my Jesus, Thou dost know that I am poor and sick, and lost through my sins; but Thou didst come from Heaven on purpose to heal the sick and to save the lost who repent of having offended Thee. The Prophet Isaias said Thou wouldst *heal the contrite of heart*—(Is. lxi. 1). And of Thee St. Matthew writes : *The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost*—(Matt. xviii. 11).

Friday—Twelfth Week after Pentecost

(First Friday of September).

Morning Meditation

THE COMPASSIONATE HEART OF JESUS.

O my Jesus, Thou dost pardon penitent sinners, and Thou dost not refuse to give them in this world everything in Holy Communion, and in the next world everything in eternal glory. Where, then, is a heart to be found so amiable and so compassionate as Thine, O my dearest Saviour?

I.

Where shall we find a heart more compassionate or tender than the Heart of Jesus, or one that has greater pity for our miseries?

This pity induced Him to descend from Heaven to this earth; it made Him say that He was that Good Shepherd Who came to give His life to save His sheep. In order to obtain the pardon of our sins, He would not spare Himself, but would sacrifice Himself on the Cross, that by His sufferings He might satisfy for the punishment due to us. This pity and compassion makes Him say even now: *Why will ye die, O house of Israel? Return ye and live*—(Ezech. xviii. 31, 32). O men, He says, my poor children, why will you damn yourselves by flying from Me? Do you not see that by separating yourselves from Me you are hastening to eternal death? I desire not to see you lost; do not despair; as long as you wish to return, return and you shall recover your life: *Return ye and live.*

O compassionate Heart of my Jesus, have pity on me. Most sweet Jesus, have mercy on me. I say now, and beseech Thee to give me the grace always to say to Thee : "Most sweet Jesus, have mercy on me!" Even before I offended Thee, my Redeemer, I certainly did not deserve any of the favours Thou hast bestowed upon me. Thou hast created me, Thou hast given me so much light and knowledge; and all without any merit of mine. But after I had offended Thee, I not only did not deserve Thy favour, but I deserved to be forsaken by Thee and cast into hell. Thy compassion has made Thee wait for me and preserve my life even when I had offended Thee. Thy compassion has enlightened me and offered me pardon; it has given me sorrow for my sins, and the desire of loving Thee; and now I hope from Thy mercy to remain always in Thy grace.

II.

This compassion even makes Jesus say that He is that loving Father Who, though He sees Himself despised by His son, yet, if the son returns a penitent, He cannot reject him, but embraces him tenderly and forgets all the injuries He has received : *I will not remember all his iniquities*—(Ezech. xviii. 22). It is not thus that men behave; for though they may forgive, yet they nevertheless retain the remembrance of the offence received, and feel inclined to revenge themselves; and even if they do not revenge themselves, because they fear God, at least they always feel a very great repugnance to converse or entertain themselves with those persons who have injured them.

O my Jesus, Thou dost pardon penitent sinners, and dost not refuse in this world to give them everything in Holy Communion during their life, and everything in the other world in eternal glory, without retaining the slightest repugnance towards being united for ever to the soul that offended Thee so often. Where, therefore, is to be found a Heart so amiable and compassionate as Thine, O my dearest Saviour?

O my Jesus, cease not to show Thy compassion towards me. The mercy which I would implore of Thee is that Thou wouldst grant me light and strength to be no longer ungrateful towards Thee. No, O my Love, I do not expect that Thou shouldst again forgive me if I again turn my back against Thee; this would be presumption, and would prevent Thee from showing mercy to me any more. For what pity, O Jesus, could I expect from Thee if I were so ungrateful as to despise Thy friendship again, and to separate myself from Thee. No, my Jesus, I love Thee and I will always love Thee; and this is the mercy which I hope for and seek from Thee: "Permit me not to be separated from Thee! Permit me not to be separated from Thee!"

And I beseech thee, also, O Mary, my Mother, permit me not to be ever again separated from my God.

Spiritual Reading

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

His father saw him and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him.

What sinner can be so hardened as not to go instantly and cast himself at the feet of his Saviour, when he knows the tender compassion with which Jesus Christ is prepared to embrace him, and carry him on His shoulders, as soon as he repents of his sins?

The Lord has also declared His tenderness towards penitent sinners in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. In that Parable the Son of God says that a certain young man, unwilling to be any longer under the control of his father, and desiring to live according to his caprice and corrupt inclinations, asked the portion of his father's substance which fell to him. The father gave it with sorrow, weeping over the ruin of his son. The son departed from his father's house. Having in a short time

squandered his substance, he was reduced to such a degree of misery that, to procure the necessaries of life he was obliged to become a swine-herd. All this is a figure of the sinner, who, after departing from God, and losing Divine grace and all the merits he has acquired, leads a life of misery under the slavery of the devil. In the Gospel it is added that the young man, seeing his wretched condition, resolved to return to his father; and the father, who is a figure of Jesus Christ, seeing his son return to him, was instantly moved to pity. *His father saw him, and was moved with compassion*—(Luke xv. 20); and, instead of driving him away, as the ungrateful son had deserved, *running to him, he fell upon his neck and kissed him.* He ran with open arms to meet him, and, through tenderness, fell upon his neck, and consoled him by his embraces. He then said to his servants: *Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him.* According to St. Jerome and St. Augustine, *the first robe* signifies Divine grace, which, in addition to new celestial gifts, God, by granting pardon, gives to the penitent sinner. *And put a ring on his hand.* By recovering the grace of God, the soul becomes again the spouse of Jesus Christ. *And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry.* Bring hither the fatted calf—which signifies the Holy Communion, or Jesus in the holy sacrament mystically killed and offered in sacrifice on the altar; let us eat and rejoice. But why, O Divine Father, so much joy at the return of so ungrateful a child? *Because*, answered the Father, *this my son was dead, and he is come to life again, was lost and is found*—(Luke xv.).

This compassion of Jesus Christ was experienced by the sinful woman who cast herself at the feet of Jesus, and washed them with her tears. The Lord, turning to her with sweetness, consoled her by saying: *Thy sins are forgiven . . . thy faith hath made thee safe; go in peace*—(Luke vii. 48, 50). Child, thy sins are pardoned; thy confidence in Me has saved thee; go in peace! The tender compassion of Jesus Christ was experienced also by the man who was ailing for thirty-eight years, and

who was infirm both in body and soul. The Lord cured his malady, and pardoned his sins. *Behold*, says Jesus to him, *thou art made whole; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee.* The tenderness of the Redeemer was also felt by the leper who said to Jesus Christ : *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* Jesus answered : *I will : be thou made clean.* As if He said : Yes, I will that thou be made clean; for I have come down from Heaven for the purpose of consoling all. Be healed, then, according to thy desire. *And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed*—(Matt. viii. 2-3).

We have also a proof of the tender compassion of the Son of God for sinners in His conduct towards the woman taken in adultery. The scribes and pharisees brought her before Jesus and said : *This woman was even now taken in adultery. Now Moses, in the law, commands us to stone such a one. But what sayest thou?* And this they did, as St. John says, tempting Him. They intended to accuse Him of transgressing the law of Moses, if He said that she ought to be liberated; and they expected to destroy His character for meekness, if He said that she should be stoned, says St. Augustine. But what was the answer of our Lord? He neither said that she should be stoned nor dismissed : *but, bowing himself down, he wrote with his finger on the ground.* The interpreters say that, probably, what He wrote on the ground was a text of Scripture admonishing the accusers of their own sins, which were, perhaps, greater than that of the woman charged with adultery. *He then lifted himself up, and said to them : He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* The scribes and pharisees went away one by one, and the woman stood there alone. Jesus Christ, turning to her, said : *Hath no man condemned thee? Who said : No man, Lord. And Jesus said : Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more*—(Jo. viii. 3-11). Since no one has condemned you, fear not that you shall be condemned by Me, Who have come on earth, not to condemn, but to pardon and save sinners. Go in peace, and sin no more.

Jesus Christ has come, not to condemn, but to deliver

sinners from hell, as soon as they resolve to amend their lives. And when He sees them obstinately bent on their own perdition, He addresses them with tears, in the words of Ezechiel : *Why will you die, O house of Israel?* —(Ezech. xviii. 31). My children, why will you die? Why do you voluntarily rush into hell, when I have come from Heaven to deliver you from it by death? You are already dead to the grace of God. But I will not your death : return to Me, and I will restore to you the life you have lost. *For I desire not the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God : return ye and live*—(Ezech. xviii. 32). But some sinners, who are immersed in the abyss of sin, may say : Perhaps, if we return to Jesus Christ, He will drive us away. No; for the Redeemer has said : *And him that cometh to me I will not cast out*—(Jo. vi. 37). No one that comes to me with sorrow for his past sins, however manifold and enormous they may have been, shall be rejected.

Behold how, in another place, the Redeemer encourages us to throw ourselves at His feet with the certain hope of consolation and pardon. *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you* —(Matt. xi. 28). Come to Me, all ye poor sinners, who labour for your own damnation, and groan under the weight of your crimes; come, and I will deliver you from all your troubles. Again God speaks : *Come and accuse me, saith the Lord; if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool*—(Is. i. 18). Come with sorrow for the offences you committed against Me, and if I do not give you pardon, accuse Me. As if He said : Upbraid Me; rebuke Me as untruthful; for I promise that, though your sins were of scarlet—that is, of the most horrid enormity—your soul, by My Blood, in which I shall wash it, will become white and beautiful as snow.

Let us, then, O sinners, return at once to Jesus Christ. Let us immediately return, before death overtakes us in sin and sends us to hell, where the mercies and graces of the Lord shall, if we do not amend, be so many swords to lacerate the heart for all eternity.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise!

St. Luke writes that of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus Christ, one continued obstinate, the other was converted; who seeing his miserable companion blaspheming Jesus Christ: *If thou art the Christ, save thyself and us,* turned and reproved him, saying that they were deservedly punished, but that Jesus was innocent. Then he turned to Jesus Himself and said: *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;* by which words he recognised Jesus Christ as his true Lord and the King of Heaven. Jesus then promised him Paradise on that very day: *Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*—(Luke xxiii. 39-43). A learned author writes that, in conformity with this promise, the Lord, on that very day, immediately after His death, showed Himself openly, and rendered the repentant thief blessed, though He did not confer on him all the delight of Heaven before he entered there.

Arnold of Chartres, in his treatise on the Seven Words, remarks upon all the virtues which the good thief exercised at the time of his death: "He believed, he repented, he confessed, he preached, he loved, he trusted, he prayed."

He exercised Faith when he said, *When thou comest into thy kingdom;* believing that Jesus Christ, after His death, would enter into His glorious kingdom. He believed, says St. Gregory, that He Whom he saw dying was about to reign.

He exercised penitence together with the confession of

his sins, saying : *We indeed justly; for we received the due reward of our deeds.* St. Augustine observes that before his confession he had not boldness to hope for pardon; he did not dare to say *Remember me*, until, by the confession of his guilt, he had thrown off the burden of his sins. On this St. Athanasius exclaims : O blessed thief, thou hast stolen a kingdom by that confession !

II.

This holy penitent also exercised other noble virtues; he preached, declaring the innocence of Jesus Christ, *This man hath done no evil.* He exercised love of God, receiving death with resignation, as the punishment due to his sins, saying : *We receive the due reward of our deeds.* Hence St. Cyprian, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine do not scruple to call him a Martyr; and Silveira says that this happy thief was a true Martyr, as the executioners broke his legs with increased fury, because he had declared the innocence of Jesus; and that the Saint willingly accepted this torment for the love of his Lord.

Let us also in this circumstance remark the goodness of God, Who always gives us more than we ask for, as St. Ambrose says : " The Lord always grants more than we ask; the thief prayed that Jesus would remember him, and Jesus said : *To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*" St. John Chrysostom further remarks that no one merited the possession of Paradise before this thief. Thus is confirmed what God said by Ezechiel, that, when the sinner heartily repents of his sins, God pardons him in the same way as if he had forgotten all the sins he had committed. And Isaias gives us to understand that God is so urgent for our good, that when we pray He instantly hears us. St. Augustine says that God is ever prepared to embrace penitent sinners.

And thus it was that the cross of the wicked thief, being endured with impatience, became to him a precipice leading to hell; while the cross endured with patience by the good thief became to him a ladder to Paradise.

Happy wert thou, O holy thief, who hadst the fortune to unite thy death to the death of thy Saviour.

O my Jesus, henceforth I sacrifice to Thee my life, and I seek for grace to enable me, at the hour of my death, to unite the sacrifice of my life to that which Thou didst offer to God upon the Cross, and through which I hope to die in Thy grace, and, loving Thee with pure love stripped of every earthly affection, to attain to love Thee with all my powers through all eternity.

Saturday—Twelfth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE CLEMENCY AND COMPASSION OF MARY.

"I am called the Mother of Mercy," said our Blessed Lady to St. Bridget, "and truly God's mercy hath made me thus merciful. "What, then," says St. Bernard, "can ever flow from a source of compassion but compassion itself?"

I.

St. Bernard, speaking of the great compassion of Mary, towards us poor creatures, says that "she is the land overflowing with milk and honey promised by God." Hence St. Leo observes that "the Blessed Virgin has so merciful a heart that she deserves not only to be called merciful, but to be styled *Mercy* itself." St. Bonaventure also, considering that Mary was made Mother of God on account of the miserable, and that to her is committed

the charge of dispensing mercy; and considering, moreover, the tender care she takes of all, and that her compassion is so great that she seems to have no other desire than that of relieving the needy; says, that when he looks at her, he seems no longer to see the justice of God, but only the Divine mercy, of which Mary is full. "O Lady, when I behold thee I can only discern mercy, for thou wast made Mother of God for the wretched, and then intrusted with their charge: thou art all solicitude for them; thou art walled in with mercy; thy only wish is to show it."

The compassion of Mary is indeed so great towards us that the Abbot Guerric says that "her loving heart can never remain a moment without bringing forth its fruits of tenderness." "And what," exclaims St. Bernard, "can ever flow from a source of compassion but compassion itself?"

Mary is called an olive-tree: *As a fair olive-tree in the plains*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 19). For, as from the olive, oil (a symbol of mercy) alone is extracted, so from the hands of Mary graces and mercy alone proceed. When we go to this good Mother for the oil of her mercy, we cannot fear that she will deny it to us, as the wise virgins in the Gospel did to the foolish ones: *lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you*—(Matt. xxv. 9). Oh, no! for she is indeed rich in this oil of mercy, as St. Bonaventure assures us, "Mary is filled with the oil of compassion." She is called by the Church not only a prudent Virgin, but most prudent, that we may understand, says Hugo of St. Victor, that she is so full of grace and compassion, that she can supply all, without losing any herself. "Thou, O Blessed Virgin, art full of grace, and indeed so full, that the whole world may draw of this overflowing oil. For if the prudent virgins provided oil in vessels with their lamps, thou, O most prudent Virgin, hast borne an overflowing and inexhaustible vessel, from which, the oil of mercy streaming, thou replenishest the lamps of all."

II.

But why, I ask, is this beautiful olive-tree said to stand in the midst of the plains, and not rather in the midst of a garden, surrounded by walls and hedges? Hugo of St. Victor tells us that it is in the plains, "that all sinners may see her, that all may go to her for refuge"; that all may see her easily, and as easily have recourse to her, to obtain remedies for all their ills. This beautiful explanation is confirmed by St. Antoninus, who says: "All can go to and gather the fruit of an olive-tree in the midst of a plain; and thus all, both just and sinners, can have recourse to Mary to obtain her mercy." He then adds: "O how many sentences of condemnation has not this most Blessed Virgin revoked by her compassionate prayers, in favour of sinners who have had recourse to her?" "And what safer refuge," says the devout Thomas à Kempis, "can we ever find than the compassionate heart of Mary? There the poor find a home, the infirm a remedy, the afflicted relief, the doubtful counsel, and the abandoned succour."

Wretched indeed should we be had we not this Mother of Mercy always attentive and solicitous to relieve us in our wants! *Where there is no woman, he mourneth that is in want*—(Ecclus. xxxvi. 27), says the Holy Ghost. "This woman," says St. John Damascene, "is precisely the most Blessed Virgin Mary, and wherever this most holy woman is not, the sick man groans." And surely it cannot be otherwise, since all graces are dispensed at the prayers of Mary; and where this is wanting, there can be no hope of mercy, as our Lord gave St. Bridget to understand in these words: "Unless the prayers of Mary interposed, there could be no hope of mercy."

O Mary, thou art clement with the miserable; compassionate towards those who pray to thee; sweet towards those who love thee; clement with the penitent; compassionate towards those who advance; and sweet to the perfect. Thou art clement in delivering us from chastisement, compassionate in bestowing graces, and sweet in giving thyself to those who seek thee!

Spiritual Reading

I.—"WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH."

Mary was born a Saint, and a great Saint; for the grace with which God enriched her from the beginning was great, and the fidelity with which she immediately corresponded to it was great.

But to form an idea of the greatness of Mary's sanctity, even at this early period, we must consider, first, the greatness of the first grace with which God enriched her; and secondly, the greatness of her fidelity in immediately corresponding to it.

To begin with the first point, it is certain that Mary's soul was the most beautiful God had ever created: nay more, after the work of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, this was the greatest and most worthy of Himself that an Omnipotent God ever did in the world. St. Peter Damian calls it "a work only surpassed by God Himself." Hence it follows that Divine grace did not come into Mary by drops as in other Saints, *but like rain on the fleece*—(Ps. lxxi. 6), as it was foretold by David. So the soul of Mary, like the fleece, imbibed the whole shower of grace, without losing a drop. St. Basil of Seleucia says that "the holy Virgin was full of grace, because she was elected and pre-elected by God, and the Holy Spirit was about to take full possession of her." Hence she said, by the lips of Ecclesiasticus: *My abode is in the full assembly of saints*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 16); that is, as St. Bonaventure explains it, "I hold in plenitude all that other Saints have held in part." And St. Vincent Ferrer, speaking particularly of the sanctity of Mary before her birth, says "that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified" (surpassed in sanctity) "in her mother's womb above all Saints and Angels."

The grace that the Blessed Virgin received exceeded

not only that of each particular Saint, but of all the Angels and Saints put together, as the most learned Father Francis Pepe, of the Society of Jesus, proves in his beautiful work on the greatness of Jesus and Mary. And he asserts that this opinion, so glorious for our Queen, is now generally admitted, and considered as beyond doubt by modern Theologians (such as Carthagena, Suarez, Spinelli, Recupito, and Guerra, who have professedly examined the question, and this was never done by the more ancient Theologians). And besides this, he relates that the Divine Mother sent Father Martin Guttierez to thank Father Suarez, on her part, for having so courageously defended this most probable opinion, and which, according to Father Segneri, in his *Client of Mary*, was afterwards believed and defended by the University of Salamanca.

But if this opinion is general and certain, that other is also very probable, namely, that Mary received this grace, exceeding that of all men and Angels together, in the first instance of her Immaculate Conception. Father Suarez strongly maintains this opinion, as do also Father Spinelli, Father Recupito, and Father La Colombiere. But besides the authority of Theologians, there are two great and convincing arguments which sufficiently prove the correctness of the above-mentioned opinion.

The first is that Mary was chosen by God to be the Mother of the Divine Word. Hence Denis the Carthusian says that as she was chosen to an order superior to that of all other creatures (for in a certain sense the dignity of the Mother of God, as Fr. Suarez asserts, belongs to the order of hypostatic union), it is reasonable to suppose that from the very beginning of her life gifts of a superior order were conferred upon her, and such gifts as must have incomparably surpassed those granted to all other creatures. And indeed it cannot be doubted that when the Person of the Eternal Word was, in the Divine decrees, predestined to make Himself man, a Mother was also destined for Him, from whom He was to take His human nature; and our infant Mary was to be this Mother. Now St. Thomas teaches that "God gives

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every one grace proportioned to the dignity for which He destines him." And St. Paul teaches us the same thing when he says, *Who also hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament*—(2 Cor. iii. 6), that is, the Apostles received gifts from God, proportioned to the greatness of the office with which they were charged. St. Bernardine of Sienna adds that it is an axiom in Theology that when a person is chosen by God for any state, he receives not only the dispositions necessary for it, but even the gifts he needs to sustain that state with decorum. But as Mary was chosen to be the Mother of God, it was quite becoming that God should adorn her, in the first moment of her existence, with an immense grace, and one of a superior order to that of all other men and Angels, since it had to correspond to the immense and most high dignity to which God exalted her. And all Theologians come to this conclusion with St. Thomas, who says, "the Blessed Virgin was chosen to be the Mother of God; and therefore it is not to be doubted that God fitted her for it by His grace"; so much so that Mary, before becoming Mother of God, was adorned with a sanctity so perfect that it rendered her fit for this great dignity. The holy Doctor says that " in the Blessed Virgin there was a preparatory perfection, which rendered her fit to be the Mother of Christ, and this was the perfection of sanctification."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

He saith to his Mother: Woman, behold thy Son! After that he saith to the disciple: Behold thy Mother!

We read in St. Mark that on Calvary there were present many women, who watched Jesus on the

Cross, but from afar off, among whom was Mary Magdalen. We believe also, that among these holy women was the Divine Mother also; while St. John says that the Blessed Virgin stood, not afar off, but close to the Cross, together with Mary of Cleophas and Mary Magdalen—(John xix. 25). Euthymius attempts to reconcile this discrepancy, and says that the Holy Virgin, seeing her Son drawing near to death, came from among the rest of the women close up to the Cross, overcoming her fear of the soldiers who surrounded it, and enduring with patience all the insults and repulses she had to suffer from these soldiers who watched the condemned, in order that she might draw near her beloved Son. Thus also a learned author, who wrote the Life of Jesus Christ, says: "There were His friends, who watched Him from afar; but the Holy Virgin, the Magdalen, and another Mary stood close to the Cross with John; wherefore Jesus, seeing His Mother and John, spoke to them the words above mentioned. Truly she was a Mother who, even in the terror of death, deserted not her Son. Some mothers fly when they see their children dying; their love does not suffer them to be present at their death when they have not the power of relieving them; but the holy Mother, the nearer her Son approached death, the nearer she drew to His Cross."

The afflicted Mother thus was standing close to the Cross; and as the Son sacrificed His life, so she offered her pangs for the salvation of men, sharing with perfect resignation all the pains and insults which her Son suffered in His death. A writer says that they who would describe her fainting at the foot of the Cross dishonour the constancy of Mary. She was *the valiant woman*, who neither fainted nor wept. "I read of her standing, but not of her weeping," says St. Ambrose.

II.

The anguish the Holy Virgin endured in the Passion of her Son exceeded all the pain a human heart can endure:

but the grief of Mary was not a barren grief, like that of other mothers who behold the sufferings of their children; it was a fruitful grief, since through the merits of her great grief, and through her love, according to the opinion of St. Augustine, as she was the natural Mother of our Head, Jesus Christ, so she then became the spiritual Mother of us who are His faithful members, in co-operating with Him by her love in causing us to be born, and to be the children of the Church.

St. Bernard writes that upon Mount Calvary both of these two great Martyrs, Jesus and Mary, were silent, because the great pain that they endured took from them the power of speaking. The Mother looked upon her Son in agony upon the Cross, and the Son looked upon the Mother in agony at the foot of the Cross, all wounded with compassion for the pains He suffered.

Mary and John, then, stood nearer to the Cross than the others, so that they could more easily hear the words and mark the looks of Jesus Christ in the midst of so great a tumult. St. John writes: *When Jesus then saw his mother and the disciple standing, whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son*—(John xix. 26). But if Mary and John were accompanied by other women, why is it said that Jesus saw His Mother and the disciple, as if the others had not been perceived by Him? St. John Chrysostom writes that love always makes us look more closely at the object of our love. And St. Ambrose in a similar way writes: It is natural that we should see those we love before any others. The Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Bridget that in order that Jesus might look upon His Mother, who stood by the side of the Cross, He was obliged first to compress His eyebrows in order to remove the blood from His eyes, which prevented Him from seeing.

Jesus said to her: *Woman, behold thy son!* with His eyes turned towards St. John, who stood by His side. But why did He call her *woman* and not *mother*? He called her *woman*, we may say, because, drawing now near to death, He spoke as if departing from her and saying: Woman, in a little while I shall be dead, and

thou wilt have no Son upon earth; I leave thee, therefore, John, who will serve and love thee as a son. And from this we may understand that St. Joseph was already dead, since if he had been still alive he would have been still the guardian of the Mother.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE HOUSE OF ETERNITY.

We err in calling the place where we now dwell our home. After a little while the grave will be the home of our body until the Day of Judgment, and the home of our soul will be the House of Eternity, in Heaven or Hell for ever!

1.

We err in calling the place where we now dwell our home. After a little while the grave will be the home of our body until the Day of Judgment, and the home of our soul will be the House of Eternity, in Heaven or Hell for ever, *because man shall go into the house of his eternity*—(Eccles. xii. 5). At our burial our corpses do not go to the grave of themselves; they are carried there by others; but the soul goes to the place which awaits it, either of eternal joy or eternal woe. *A man shall go to the house of his eternity.* According as a man lives well or ill, so he goes to the home prepared, in Paradise or in Hell, which he shall never change.

Those who live on this earth often change their home, either to please themselves or because they are compelled. In eternity the habitation is never changed; where we enter the first time, there we abide forever. *If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in whatever place it shall fall, there shall it be*—(Eccles. xi. 3). He that enters into the South, which is Heaven, will be ever happy; he that enters the North, which is Hell, will be ever miserable.

He, then, who enters Heaven, will be always united with God, always in company with the Saints, always in the profoundest peace, always abundantly contented; because every blessed soul is filled and satisfied with joy, nor will he ever know the fear of losing it. If fear of losing their happiness could enter among the Blessed, they would be no longer happy; for the mere thought of losing the joy they possess would disturb the peace they enjoy.

On the other hand, whoever enters into Hell will be forever far from God. He will ever suffer in the fire of the damned. Let us not think that the pains of Hell will be like those of earth, where, through the force of habit, a trouble continually grows less; for, as in Paradise, delights never cause weariness, but seem ever new, as though they were for the first time enjoyed, which is implied by the expression of "the new canticle" which the Blessed are ever singing; so, in Hell, the pains never grow less through all eternity. Long custom will never diminish their torment. The miserable beings who are damned will feel the same anguish through eternity that they feel the first moment they experience its pangs.

II.

St. Augustine says that he who believes in eternity and is not converted to God has either lost his senses or his Faith. Woe, cries St. Cesarius, woe to sinners who enter eternity without knowing it, through having neglected to think upon it! And then he adds: "But, oh, double woe! They enter it and they never come forth!" It is a

double woe, the first will be to fall into that abyss of fire; the second, that he who falls into it will never come forth: the gates of hell open only to those who enter, not to those who would depart.

No; the Saints did not do too much when they went to hide themselves in caves and deserts, to eat herbs, and to sleep on the ground, in order to save their souls. "They did not do too much," says St. Bernard, "because, where eternity is in question, no security can be too great." When, then, God visits us with any cross of infirmity, poverty, or any evil, let us think of the hell we have deserved, and thus every sorrow will appear light. Let us say, with Job: *I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I have deserved*—(Job, xxxiii. 27). O Lord, I have offended Thee, and many times betrayed Thee, and I have not been punished as I deserved; how, then, can I lament if Thou sendest me tribulation—I, who have so often deserved hell?

O my Jesus, send me not to Hell, to the Hell in which I could no longer love Thee, but should hate Thee forever. Deprive me of everything—of property, health, life; but deprive me not of Thyself. Grant that I may love Thee and praise Thee forever; and then chastise me, and do with me what Thou wilt. O Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading

2.—"*WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH.*"

St. Thomas says that Mary was called *full of grace*, not on the part of grace itself, for she had it not in the highest possible degree, since even the habitual grace of Jesus Christ (according to the same holy Doctor) was not such that the absolute power of God could not have

made it greater, although it was a grace sufficient for the end for which His humanity was ordained by Divine Wisdom, that is, for its union with the Person of the Eternal Word. Although Divine power could make something greater and better than the habitual grace of Christ, it could not fit it for anything greater than the personal union with the only-begotten Son of the Father, and to which union that measure of grace sufficiently corresponds, according to the limit placed by Divine Wisdom. For the same angelic Doctor teaches that the Divine power is so great that, however much it gives, it can always give more; and although the natural capacity of creatures is in itself limited as to receiving, so that it can be entirely filled, nevertheless its power to obey the Divine will is unlimited, and God can always fill it more by increasing its capacity to receive. "As far as its natural capacity goes, it can be filled; but it cannot be filled as far as its power of obeying goes." But now to return to our proposition: St. Thomas says that the Blessed Virgin was not filled with grace, as to grace itself, nevertheless she is called full of grace as to herself, for she had an immense grace, one which was sufficient, and corresponded to her immense dignity, so much so that it fitted her to be the Mother of God: "The Blessed Virgin is full of grace, not with the fulness of grace itself, for she had not grace in the highest degree of excellence in which it can be had, nor had she it as to all its effects; but she was said to be full of grace as to herself, because she had sufficient grace for that state to which she was chosen by God, that is, to be the Mother of His only-begotten Son." Hence Benedict Fernandez says that "the measure whereby we may know the greatness of the grace communicated to Mary is her dignity of Mother of God."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Behold thy Son! . . . Behold thy Mother!"

I.

All antiquity asserts that St. John was ever a virgin, and especially on this account was he given as a son to Mary, and honoured in being made to occupy the place of Jesus Christ; on which account the holy Church sings: "To John, a virgin, He commended His Virgin Mother." And from the moment of the Lord's death, as it is written, St. John received Mary into his own house, and assisted and obeyed her throughout her life, as if she had been his own mother. Jesus Christ willed that this beloved disciple should be an eye-witness of His death, in order that he might more confidently bear witness to it in his Gospel, and might be able to say: *He that saw it hath given testimony*—(Jo. xix. 35). And on this account the Lord, at the time when the other disciples abandoned Him, gave St. John strength to be present until His death in the midst of so many enemies.

But let us examine more deeply the reason why Jesus called Mary *woman*, and not *mother*. By this expression He desired to show that she was *the woman* foretold in the Book of Genesis, who would crush the serpent's head: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel*—(Gen. iii. 15). It is doubted by none that this *woman* was the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, by means of her Son, would crush the head of Satan—if it be not more correct to say that her Son, by means of her who would bear Him, would do this. Naturally Mary was the enemy of the serpent, because Lucifer was haughty, ungrateful, disobedient, while she was humble, grateful, and obedient. It is said, *She shall*

crush thy head, because Mary, by means of her Son, beat down the pride of Lucifer, who lay in wait for the heel of Jesus Christ, which means His holy humanity, which was the part of Him which was nearest to the earth; while the Saviour by His death had the glory of conquering him, and of depriving him of that empire which, through sin, he had obtained over the human race.

O suffering Mother, thou knowest that I have deserved hell; I have no hope of being saved, except by the merits of the death of Jesus Christ. Thou must pray for me, that I may obtain this grace; and I pray thee to obtain it for me by the love of that Son Whom thou sawest bow His head and expire on Calvary before thine eyes. O Queen of Martyrs, O advocate of sinners, help me always, and especially in the hour of my death!

II.

God said to the serpent: *I will put enmities .... between thy seed and her seed.* This shows that after the fall of man, through sin, notwithstanding all that would be done by the Redemption of Jesus Christ, there would be two families and two posterities in the world, the children of Satan signifying the family of sinners, his children corrupted by him; and the children of Mary, signifying the holy family, which includes all the just, with their Head Jesus Christ. Hence Mary was destined to be the Mother both of the Head and of the members, namely, the faithful. The Apostle writes: *Ye are all one in Christ Jesus; and if ye are Christ's, then ye are the seed of Abraham*—(Gal. iii. 28, 29). Thus Jesus Christ and the faithful are one single body, because the Head cannot be divided from the members, and these members are all spiritual children of Mary, as they have the same spirit of her Son according to nature, who was Jesus Christ. Therefore, St. John was not called John but *the disciple* beloved by the Lord, that we might understand that Mary is the Mother of every good Christian who is beloved by Jesus Christ, and in whom Jesus Christ lives by His Spirit. This was expressed by

Origen : " Jesus said to Mary : *Behold thy son!* as if He had said : This is Jesus, whom thou hast borne, for he who is perfect lives no more himself, but Christ lives in him."

Denis the Carthusian writes that in the Passion of Jesus Christ the breast of Mary was filled with the blood which flowed from His Wounds, in order that with it she might nourish her children. And he adds that this divine Mother by her prayers and merits, which she especially acquired by sharing in the death of Jesus Christ, obtained for us a participation in the merits of the Passion of the Redeemer.

O my advocate, Mary, even now I seem to see the devils, who, in my last agony, will strive to make me despair at the sight of my sins. Oh ! abandon me not then, when thou seest me thus assaulted ; help me with thy prayers, and obtain for me confidence and holy perseverance. And because then, when my speech will be gone, and perhaps my senses, I shall not be able to invoke thy name and that of thy Son, I now call upon thee—*Jesus and Mary, I recommend my soul unto you!*

Monday—Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

OUR BLESSED MOTHER'S BIRTH-DAY.

Other children are born into this world, not only deprived of grace and reason, but infected with sin and children of wrath, condemned to misery and death ; but holy Mary came into this world a babe, it is true, in age,

but great in merit and virtue. She was sanctified in her Mother's womb above all Saints and Angels, and was born a Saint, and a great Saint.

I.

Men usually celebrate the birth-day of their children with great feastings and rejoicings; but, indeed, they should pity them rather and show signs of mourning and grief when they reflect that their children are born, not only deprived of grace and reason, but worse than this,—they are infected with sin and are children of wrath condemned to misery and death. But it is right to celebrate with festivity and universal joy the birth of our holy infant Mary. She saw the light of this world, a babe it is true in age, but great in merit and virtue. She was born a Saint and a great Saint.

Speaking particularly of Mary's sanctity before her birth, St. Vincent Ferrar says that "the Blessed Virgin was sanctified in her mother's womb above all Saints and Angels." For as Mary was chosen to be the Mother of God, it was becoming that God should adorn her, in the very first moment of her existence, with an immense grace and one of a superior order to that of all men and Angels, since her grace had to correspond to the immense and most glorious dignity to which God exalted her. The measure whereby we may know the greatness of Mary's graces is her dignity of Mother of God.

And not only was Mary the predestined Mother of God, but she was destined to be the universal mediatress of the world's salvation, the mediatress of all the graces conferred on men and Angels. The holy Church wishes us to understand this when she honours the Divine Mother by applying to her the words of Ecclesiasticus: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth. In me is all hope of life and of virtue*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 25). "Magnify the finder of grace," says St. Bernard, "the mediatress of salvation, the restorer of worlds—this am I taught by the Church proclaiming it; and thus also does she teach me to proclaim it to others." And Richard of

St. Victor says : " By Mary every creature is repaired; by her the ruin of the Angels was remedied; and by her the human race was reconciled." " By this holy Virgin all creation has been restored and reinstated in its primitive condition," says St. Anselm.

O holy and heavenly infant, thou who art the destined Mother of my Redeemer, and the great mediatress of miserable sinners, have pity on me! Behold now at thy feet another ungrateful sinner who has recourse to thee seeking thy compassion. It is true that for my ingratitude to God and to thee I deserve that God and thou should abandon me, but thou dost not refuse to succour all who recommend themselves to thee with confidence. Receive then the supplication of a sinner who places in thee the whole hope of his salvation.

II.

Let us be convinced, then, that our heavenly child Mary, as the appointed mediatress of the world and the destined Mother of the Redeemer, received at the very beginning of her existence graces exceeding in greatness that of all the Saints together. How delightful a sight, therefore, must the beautiful soul of this happy child have been to Heaven and earth, even while yet in her mother's womb! She was the most amiable creature in the eyes of God, because already laden with grace and merit she could say : *When I was a little one I pleased the Most High*. And she was at the same time the creature who, above all others the world had ever known, loved God the most; so much so, indeed, that if she had been born after her most pure Conception, she would have come into the world richer in merits and more holy than all the Saints together. Oh, how much greater must her sanctity, then, have been at her Nativity, coming into the world, as she did, with all the merits she acquired during the whole of the nine months she remained in the womb of her mother.

Let us, then, rejoice with our beloved infant Mary, who was so holy, so dear to God, so full of grace! And

let us rejoice not only on her account, but also on our own, for Mary was born full of grace for her own glory, but also for our good. For what St. John says of Jesus, *And of his fulness we have all received*, the Saints say of Mary " of whose plenitude we all receive."

O most exalted of all creatures in the world, O Saint of Saints, O holy Mary ! O abyss of charity, full of grace, succour a miserable sinner who by his own fault has lost the Divine friendship ! O Lady, do this for the love of God Who has made thee so great, so powerful, and so compassionate. This is my hope. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

3.—" *WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH.*"

It was not without reason that David said that the foundations of this city of God, that is, Mary, are planted above the summits of the mountains : *The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains*—(Ps. lxxxvi. 1). Whereby we are to understand that Mary, in the very beginning of her life, was to be more perfect than the united perfections of the entire lives of the Saints could have made her. And the Prophet continues : *The Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob*—(Ps. lxxxvi. 2). And the same king David tells us why God thus loved her ; it was because He was to become man in her virginal womb : *A man is born in her*—(Ps. lxxxvi. 5). Hence it was becoming that God should give this Blessed Virgin, in the very moment that He created her, a grace corresponding to the dignity of Mother of God.

Isaias signified the same thing when he said that, in a time to come, a mountain of the house of the Lord (which was the Blessed Virgin) was to be prepared on

the top of all other mountains; and that, in consequence, all nations would run to this mountain to receive the Divine mercies. *And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it*—(Is. ii. 2). St. Gregory, explaining this passage, says: "It is a mountain on the top of mountains; for the perfection of Mary is resplendent above that of all the Saints." And St. John Damascene, that it is *a mountain in which God is well pleased to dwell* —(Ps. lxvii. 17). Therefore Mary was called a cypress, but *a cypress of Mount Sion;* she was called a cedar, but *a cedar of Libanus*; an olive-tree, but *a fair olive-tree*; beautiful, but *beautiful as the sun*; for as St. Peter Damian said: "As the light of the sun so greatly surpasses that of the stars, that in it they are no longer visible; it so overwhelms them that they are as if they were not; so does the great Virgin Mother surpass in sanctity the whole court of Heaven." So much so that St. Bernard beautifully remarks that the sanctity of Mary was so sublime that "no other Mother than Mary was becoming a God, and no other Son than God befitted Mary."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Eli! Eli! Lamma sabacthani? My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?

I.

St. Matthew writes that Jesus uttered these words with a loud voice. Why did He thus utter them? Euthymius says that He thus cried out in order to show us His Divine power, inasmuch as, though He was on the point of expiring, He was able thus to cry aloud, which

would be impossible to dying men, through their extreme exhaustion. Also, Jesus thus cried out in order to show us the anguish in which He died. It might, perhaps, have been said that as Jesus was both God and man, He had by the power of His divinity, diminished the pains of His torments; and in order to prevent this idea, He thought fit in these words to declare that His death was more bitter than any man had ever endured, and that while the Martyrs in their torments were comforted with Divine sweetness, He, the King of Martyrs, chose to die deprived of every consolation, satisfying the utmost rigour of the Divine justice for all the sins of men. And therefore Silveira remarks that Jesus called His Father *God*, and not *Father*, because He was then regarding Him as a *Judge*, and not as a son regards his father.

St. Leo writes that this cry of the Lord was not a lamentation, but a doctrine, because He thus desired to teach us how great is the wickedness of sin, which, as it were, compelled God to abandon His beloved Son to die without comfort, because He had taken upon Himself to make satisfaction for our sins. At the same time, Jesus was not abandoned by the Divinity, nor deprived of the glory which had been communicated to His blessed soul from the first moment of its creation; but He was deprived of all that sensible relief by which God is wont to comfort His faithful servants in their sufferings; and He was left in darkness, fear, and bitterness, pangs which were deserved by us. This deprivation of the sensible consciousness of the Divine presence was also endured by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemani; but that which He suffered on the Cross was greater and more bitter.

O Eternal Father, what offence had this Thy innocent and most obedient Son ever given Thee, that Thou shouldst punish Him with a death so bitter? Look at Him as He hangs upon this Cross, His head tortured with thorns, hanging upon the three iron nails, and supported by His own wounds! All have abandoned Him, even His own disciples; all deride Him upon the Cross and blaspheme Him; and why hast Thou aban-

doned Him, Who hast so greatly loved Him? We must understand that Jesus had taken upon Himself the sins of the whole world, although He was Himself the most holy of all men, and even Sanctity itself; since He had taken upon Himself to satisfy for all our sins, He seemed the greatest of all sinners; and having thus made Himself guilty for all, He offered Himself to pay the price for all. Because we had deserved to be abandoned forever in hell to eternal despair, therefore He chose to be given up to a death deprived of every relief, that thus He might deliver us from eternal death.

II.

In his commentary on St. John, Calvin blasphemously asserts that Jesus Christ, in order to appease His Father, experienced all the wrath which God feels towards sinners, and felt all the pains of the damned, and particularly that of despair. O blasphemy and shocking thought! How could He satisfy for our sins by committing a sin so great as that of despair? And how could this despair, which Calvin imagines, be reconciled with the other words which Jesus uttered, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*—(Luke xxiii. 46). The truth is, as St. Jerome and others explain it, that our Saviour uttered this lamentation to show not despair, but the bitterness He endured in a death without consolation. And, further, despair could only have been produced in Jesus Christ by a knowledge that He was hated by God; but how could God hate that Son Who, to obey His will, had offered Himself to satisfy for the sins of men? It was this very obedience in return for which the Father looked upon Him, and granted Him the salvation of the human race, as the Apostle writes: *Who in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to him that was able to save him from death, was heard for his reverence*—(Heb. v. 7).

Further, this abandonment of Jesus Christ was the most dreadful suffering in all His Passion; for we know

that after suffering so many bitter pangs without complaining, He lamented over this, and cried with a loud voice, and with many tears and prayers, as St. Paul tells us. Yet all these prayers and tears were poured forth in order to teach us how much He suffered to obtain the Divine mercy for us; and to enable us at the same time to comprehend how dreadful a punishment it would be for the guilty soul to be driven from God, and to be deprived forever of His love, according to the Divine threat, *I will cast them forth out of my house, I will love them no more*—(Osee ix. 15).

St. Augustine also says that Jesus Christ was troubled at the sight of His death, but that it was so for the comfort of His servants, in order that if they should find themselves disturbed at the hour of their own death, they should not suppose themselves reprobates, or abandon themselves to despair, because even He was disturbed at the sight of death.

Therefore, let us give thanks to the goodness of our Saviour for having been willing to take upon Himself the pains which were due to us, and thus to deliver us from eternal death; and let us labour henceforth to be grateful to this our Deliverer, banishing from our hearts every affection which is not for Him. And when we find ourselves desolate in spirit, and deprived of the sense of the Divine presence, let us unite our desolation to that which Jesus Christ suffered in His death. Sometimes Jesus hides Himself from the souls He most loves, but He does not really leave their hearts; He aids them with His inward grace. He is not offended if, in such an abandonment, we say, as He Himself said in the Garden to His Divine Father : *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.* But at the same time we must add : *Yet, not as I will, but as thou wilt* —(Matt. xxvi. 39). And if the desolation continues we must continue the same acts of conformity to the Divine will, as He Himself repeated them for the three hours during which He prayed in the Garden. St. Francis de Sales says that Jesus is as worthy of love when He hides Himself as when He shows Himself. Further, he

who has deserved hell, and finds himself out of it, should say only : *I will bless the Lord at all times*—(Ps. xxxiii. 2). O Lord, I do not deserve consolations; grant that through Thy grace I may love Thee, and I am content to live in desolation as long as it pleases Thee! If the damned could thus in their pains unite themselves to the Divine will, hell would be no longer hell to them.

But thou, O Lord, remove not thy help to a distance from me; look towards my defence—(Ps. xxi. 20). O my Jesus, through the merits of Thy desolate death, deprive me not of Thy help in that great battle which, in the hour of my death, I shall have to fight with hell. At that hour all things of earth will have deserted me and cannot help me; do not Thou abandon me, Who hast died for me, and canst alone help me in my extremity. Do this through the merits of those pains Thou didst suffer in Thy abandonment, by which Thou hast merited for us that we should not be abandoned by the Divine grace, as we have deserved through our sins.

Tuesday—Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE VANITY OF ALL EARTHLY THINGS.

What is your life? St. James answers : *It is a vapour.* After death the rich man is carried out of his palace to return no more! His servants accompany him to the grave, and leave him there to be devoured by worms! *Why is earth and ashes proud?*

I.

What is your life? St. James answers: It is only a vapour which appears for a little time and then is seen no more! For what is your life? *It is a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away*—(James iv. 15). The vapours which arise from the earth and are raised into the air and surrounded by the rays of the sun appear brilliant and beautiful; but the least wind disperses them, and they are seen no more. Such is the grandeur of this world. Behold that prince; to-day he is feared, attended upon, and honoured by thousands; to-morrow he will be dead, despised and hated by all. In a word, honours, pleasures, and riches must all end in death.

O my God, make me sensible of the immensity of Thy goodness, that I may love nothing but Thee.

Death deprives man of whatever he may posses in this world. What a sad sight, to behold a rich man, after death, carried out of his palace, to return thither no more! How sad to behold others taking possession of the estates he has left, of his wealth, and of whatever else he so lately enjoyed! His servants, after having accompanied him to the grave, abandon him, and leave him there, to be devoured by worms; no one esteeming him, no one flattering him. Formerly everyone obeyed his nod, but now no one takes the least notice of his orders.

How wretched have I been, O Lord, in having, for so many years, gone after the vanities of the world, and left Thee, my sovereign Good! But from this day forward I desire to possess Thee as my only treasure, as the only love of my soul.

II.

Why is earth and ashes proud?—(Ecclus. x. 9). O man, says the Almighty, seest thou not that in a short time thou wilt become dust and ashes? And on what dost thou fix thy thoughts and affections?

Reflect that death will soon rob thee of everything, and separate thee from the whole world. And if, when thou givest in thy account, thou be found wanting, what will become of thee for eternity?

I give Thee thanks, my Lord and my God. Thou speakest thus to me, because thou desirest to save me. Let Thy mercies now prevail. Thou hast promised to pardon such as repent of their offences against Thee. From the bottom of my heart do I repent: grant me therefore pardon. Thou hast promised to love those who love Thee: and I now love Thee above all things. Wherefore do Thou love me also, and hate me not any more, as I have deserved. O Mary, my advocate, in thy protection is my hope.

Spiritual Reading

4.—"*WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH.*"

The second argument by which it is proved that Mary was more holy in the first moment of her existence than all the Saints together, is founded on the great office of Mediatress of men, with which she was charged from the beginning; and which made it necessary that she should possess a greater treasure of grace from the beginning than all other men together. It is well known with what unanimity Theologians and holy Fathers give Mary this title of Mediatress, on account of her having obtained salvation for all, by her powerful intercession and her merit of "congruity," thereby procuring the great benefit of Redemption for the lost world. I say by her merit of congruity, for Jesus Christ alone is our Mediator by way of justice and by merit, "de condigno," as the Scholastics say, He having offered His merits to the Eternal Father, Who accepted them for our salvation. Mary, on the other hand, is a Mediatress

of grace, by way of simple intercession and merit of congruity, she having offered to God, as Theologians say with St. Bonaventure, her merits, for the salvation of all men; and God, as a favour, accepted them with the merits of Jesus Christ. On this account Arnold of Chartres says that "she effected our salvation in common with Christ." And Richard of St. Victor says that "Mary desired, sought, and obtained the salvation of all; nay, even she effected the salvation of all." So that everything good, and every gift in the order of grace, which each of the Saints received from God, Mary obtained for them.

And the holy Church wishes us to understand this when she honours the Divine Mother by applying the the following verses of Ecclesiasticus to her: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth. Of the way*, because by Mary all graces are dispensed to wayfarers. *Of the truth*, because the light of truth is imparted by her. *In me is all hope of life and of virtue. Of life*, for by Mary we hope to obtain the life of grace in this world, and that of glory in Heaven. *And of virtue*, for through her we acquire virtues, and especially the theological virtues which are the principal virtues of the Saints. *I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 24-25). Mary, by her intercession, obtains for her servants the gifts of Divine love, holy fear, heavenly light, and holy perseverance. From which St. Bernard concludes that it is a doctrine of the Church that Mary is the universal Mediatress of our salvation. He says: "Magnify the finder of grace, the mediatress of salvation, the restorer of ages. This I am taught by the Church proclaiming it; and thus also she teaches me to proclaim the same thing to others."

St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, asserts that the reason for which the Archangel Gabriel called her full of grace—*Hail, full of grace!*—was because only limited grace was given to others, but it was given to Mary in all its plenitude: "Truly was she full, for grace is given to other Saints partially, but the whole pleni-

tude of grace poured itself into Mary." St. Basil of Seleucia declares that she received this plenitude that she might thus be a worthy Mediatress between men and God : " Hail, full of grace, Mediatress between God and men, and by whom Heaven and earth are brought together and united." " Otherwise," says St. Laurence Justinian, " had not the Blessed Virgin been full of Divine grace, how could she have become the ladder to Heaven, the advocate of the world, and the most true Mediatress between men and God?"

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I thirst!

1.

St. John writes : *Afterwards Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said : I thirst!*—(Jo. xix. 28). Scripture here refers to the words of David : *They gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink*—(Ps. lxviii. 22).

Most severe was this bodily thirst which Jesus Christ endured on the Cross through loss of Blood, first in the Garden, and afterwards in the Hall of Judgment, at His scourging and crowning with thorns; and lastly upon the Cross, where four streams of Blood gushed forth from the Wounds of His pierced hands and feet as from four fountains. But far more terrible was His spiritual thirst, that is, His ardent desire to save all mankind and to suffer still more for us, as Blosius says, in order to show us His love. On this St. Laurence Justinian writes : " This thirst came from the ardour of His charity."

O my Jesus, Thou hast thus desired to suffer for me;

and I, when my sufferings at all increase, become so impatient that I am insupportable both to others and to myself. O my Jesus, through the merits of Thy patience, make me patient and resigned in the sicknesses and crosses which befall me; make me like unto Thyself before I die.

II.

Jesus, drawing nigh unto death, said: *Sitio—I thirst!* Tell me, Lord, says Leo of Ostia, for what dost Thou thirst? Thou makest no mention of those immense pains Thou dost suffer upon the Cross; but Thou complainest only of thirst: "Lord, what dost Thou thirst for? Thou art silent about the Cross, and criest out about the thirst." "My thirst is for your salvation," is the reply which St. Augustine makes for Jesus. O soul, says Jesus, this thirst of Mine is nothing but the desire I have for thy salvation. Yes, the loving Redeemer, with extremest ardour, desired our souls, and therefore He panted to give Himself wholly to us by His death. This was His thirst, wrote St. Laurence Justinian: "He thirsted for us, and desired to give Himself to us." St. Basil of Seleucia says, moreover, that Jesus Christ, in saying that He thirsted, would give us to understand that He, for the love which He bore us, was dying with the desire of suffering for us even more than what He had suffered: "O that desire of His, greater than the Passion!"

O most lovely God, because Thou lovest us, Thou dost desire that we should desire Thee! "God thirsts to be thirsted for," as St. Gregory says. Ah, my Lord, dost Thou thirst for me, most vile worm that I am? And shall I not thirst for Thee, my infinite God? Oh, by the merits of this thirst endured upon the Cross, give me a great thirst to love Thee, and to please Thee in all things. Thou hast promised to grant us whatever we seek from Thee: *Ask, and ye shall receive*—(Jo. xvi. 24). I ask of Thee but this one gift—the gift of loving Thee. I am, indeed, unworthy of it; but in this has to be the glory of Thy Blood,—the turning of a heart into

a great lover of Thee, a heart which at one time, so greatly despised Thee; to make a perfect flame of charity of a sinner who is altogether full of mire and of sins. Much more than this hast Thou done in dying for me. Would that I could love Thee, O Lord infinitely good, as much as Thou dost deserve! I delight in the love that is borne Thee by the souls that are enamoured of Thee, and still more in the love Thou bearest towards Thyself. With this I unite my own wretched love. I love Thee, O Eternal God; I love Thee O infinite Loveliness. Make me ever to increase in Thy love, repeating frequent acts of love of Thee, and striving to please Thee in everything, without intermission and without reserve. Make me, wretched and insignificant though I am, make me at least to be all Thine own.

Wednesday—Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE END OF MAN.

You have not come into this world for the sake of enjoyment, to grow rich and powerful; to eat, to drink, to sleep like irrational animals, but solely to love your God and work out your eternal salvation. And is this the object I have had hitherto in view?

1.

Consider, O my soul, that the being you enjoy was given to you by God: He created you to His own

Image, without any merit on your part; He adopted you for His child by Baptism; He loved you more than the most affectionate parent could have loved you; He has made you all you are, that you might know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this life, and thereby arrive at the eternal possession of Him in Heaven. Hence you did not come into this world for the sake of enjoyment to grow rich and powerful; to eat, drink, and sleep like irrational animals, but solely to love your God and to work out your eternal salvation. And is this the object I have hitherto had in view? Oh, how unfortunate have I been, in having thought of everything else rather than of my last end! O God, I beg of Thee, in the Name and for the love of Jesus, to grant that I may begin a new life of perfect holiness and conformity to Thy Divine will.

What deep remorse and bitter regret you will feel at the hour of death, if, during life, you have not devoted yourself to the service of God! How great will be your disappointment when, at the close of your days, you will perceive that nothing remains at that sorrowful moment, of all your goods, of all your pleasures, and of all your earthly glory, but a shadow that flies before you, and a bitter remembrance which pursues you! What will be your consternation when you discover that, for the sake of miserable vanities, you have lost your God, your soul, and your salvation, without the possibility of being able to repair your misfortune? O despair! O cruel torment! You will then see the value of the time you are now wasting; but it will be too late. Gladly would you then purchase time at the price of all you have; but you will not be able to do so. Oh! how full of bitterness and sorrow will that day be for every soul that has not loved and served the Lord!

II.

Consider the general disregard of men for their last end. Their ordinary thoughts are upon the accumulation of wealth, the gratification of their senses, parties

of pleasure, amusement, and festivities. They think nothing of God or of His service; they do nothing for the salvation of their souls; they regard the affair of salvation as a trifle not worthy of notice. Thus, O deplorable misfortune! the greater part of Christians, by indulging in foolish pleasures and criminal gratifications, precipitate themselves into hell. O man, you go to great pains to damn yourself, and will you do nothing for your salvation? Listen to the dying sentiments of a Secretary of State of one of the kings of England: "How great," said he, "is my misfortune! I have used much paper in writing letters for my sovereign, and, alas! I have not used one sheet to help me in the recollection of my sins, that I might make a good Confession!" Listen to the death-bed sentiments of a king of Spain: "Oh that I had spent my life in a desert, occupied in serving God, and had never been a king!" But to what do these sighs and lamentations then serve, but only to augment the horrors of despair? Learn, then, this day, at the expense of others, to devote yourself to the salvation of your soul: remember well that all your actions, all your words, and all your thoughts that are not directed to God are entirely lost. Oh! it is time then to amend your life. Do not wait, therefore, to be convinced of this till you arrive at the gates of eternity, and the jaws of hell: it will be then too late. O my God, pardon me all the sins of my life: I love Thee above all things. I am sorry, from the bottom of my heart, for all my sins. O Mary, my hope, intercede with Jesus in my behalf.

Spiritual Reading

5.—"*WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH.*"

If Holy Mary, then, as the already destined Mother of our common Redeemer, received from the very begin-

ning the office of Mediatress of all men, and consequently even of the Saints, it was also requisite from the very beginning she should have a grace exceeding that of all the Saints for whom she was to intercede. I will explain myself more clearly. If, by the means of Mary, all men were to render themselves dear to God, necessarily Mary was more holy and more dear to Him than all men together. Otherwise, how could she have interceded for all others? That an intercessor may obtain the favour of a prince for all his vassals it is absolutely necessary that he should be more dear to his prince than all the other vassals. And therefore St. Anselm concludes that Mary deserved to be made the worthy repairer of the lost world, because she was the most holy and the most pure of all creatures. "The pure sanctity of her heart, surpassing the purity and sanctity of all other creatures, merited for her that she should be made the repairer of the lost world."

Mary, then, was the Mediatress of men. It may be asked, but how can she be called also the Mediatress of the Angels? Many Theologians maintain that Jesus Christ merited the grace of perseverance for the Angels also; so that as Jesus was their Mediator *de condigno*, so also Mary may be said to be the Mediatress even of the Angels *de congruo*, she having hastened the coming of the Redeemer by her prayers. At least meriting *de congruo* to become the Mother of the Messias, she merited for the Angels that the thrones lost by the devils should be filled up. Thus she at least merited this accidental glory for them; and therefore Richard of St. Victor says: "By her every creature is repaired; by her the ruin of the Angels is remedied; and by her human nature is reconciled." And before him St. Anselm said: "All things are recalled and reinstated in their primitive state by this Blessed Virgin."

Let us conclude that our heavenly child, because she was appointed Mediatress of the world, as also because she was destined to be the Mother of the Redeemer, received at the very beginning of her existence, grace exceeding in greatness that of all the Saints together.

Hence, how delightful a sight must the beautiful soul of this happy child have been to Heaven and earth, although still enclosed in her mother's womb! She was the most amiable creature in the eyes of God, because she was already laden with grace and merit, and could say: "*When I was a little one I pleased the Most High.*" And she was at the same time the creature above all others that had ever appeared in the world up to that moment, who loved God the most; so much so, that had Mary been born immediately after her most pure Conception, she would have come into the world richer in merits and more holy than all the Saints united. Then let us only reflect how much greater her sanctity must have been at her nativity; coming into the world after acquiring all the merits that she did acquire during the whole of the nine months that she remained in the womb of her mother.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

It is consummated!

I.

St. John writes: *Jesus, therefore, when he had taken the vinegar, said, It is consummated*—(Jo. xix. 30). At this moment Jesus, before breathing out His soul, placed before His eyes all the sacrifices of the Old Law (which were all figures of the Sacrifice upon the Cross), all the prayers of the Patriarchs, and all the prophecies which had been uttered respecting His life and His death, all the injuries and insults which it was predicted He would suffer; and, seeing that all was now accomplished, He said: *It is consummated.*

St. Paul encourages us to run generously and face with patience the struggle which awaits us in this life with our enemies, in order to obtain salvation: *Let us*

run by patience to the fight proposed to us : looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of Faith, who, having joy set before him, endured the Cross—(Heb. xii. 1, 2). The Apostle thus exhorts us to resist temptations with patience unto the end, after the example of Jesus Christ, Who would not come down from the Cross while life remained. On this St. Augustine says : " What did He teach thee, Who, when He hung upon the Cross, would not come down, but that thou shouldst be strong in thy God?" Jesus thought fit to complete His sacrifice even to death, in order to convince us that the reward of glory is not given by God except to those who persevere to the end, as He teaches us in St. Matthew : *He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved* —(Matt. x. 22).

Therefore, when, through our own passions, or the temptations of the devil, or the persecutions of men, we feel ourselves disturbed and excited to lose our patience, and to abandon ourselves to displeasing God, let us cast our eyes on Jesus crucified, Who poured forth all His Blood for our salvation, and let us reflect that we have not yet poured forth one drop of blood for love of Him : *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin*—(Heb. xii. 4). When, therefore, we are called to yield up any point of honour, to abstain from any resentful feeling; to deprive ourselves of any satisfaction, or of anything we are curious to see, or to do anything which is not to our taste, let us be ashamed to deny this gift to Jesus Christ. He has treated us without holding anything back; He has given His own life and all His Blood; let us, then, be ashamed to treat Him with reserve.

II.

Let us oppose to our enemies all the resistance we are bound to make, and hope for victory from the merits of Jesus Christ alone, by means of which alone the Saints, and especially the holy Martyrs, have overcome torments and death : *In all these things we overcome, because of him that hath loved us*—(Rom. viii. 37).

Therefore, when the devil pictures to us obstacles which, through our weakness, seem extremely difficult to overcome, let us turn our eyes to Jesus crucified, and, wholly trusting in His help and merits, let us say, with the Apostle : *I can do all things in him who strengthens me* —(Phil. iv. 13). By myself I can do nothing, but by the help of Jesus I can do everything.

Thus let us animate ourselves to endure the tribulations of the present life, by the sight of the pains of Jesus on the Cross. Behold, says the Lord from this Cross—behold the great multitude of pains and of wrongs I suffer for thee upon this tree. My body hangs by three nails, and rests alone upon My very Wounds. The people who surround Me blaspheme Me and afflict Me, and My spirit within Me is more afflicted than My body. I suffer all for love of thee; behold the affection I bear thee, and love Me; and be not wearied at suffering anything for Me, Who, for thee, have lived a life so afflicted, and now am dying so bitter a death.

O my Jesus, Thou hast placed me in the world that I might serve Thee and love Thee; Thou hast given me so many lights and graces that I might be faithful to Thee; but, in my ingratitude, how often, in order that I might not deprive myself of my own satisfaction—how often have I been willing to lose Thy grace and turn my back upon Thee! Oh, through Thy desolate death, which Thou didst accept for my sake, give me strength to be grateful to Thee during what remains to me of life, while from this day forth I intend to drive from my heart every affection which is not for Thee, my God, my Love, and my All.

Mary, my Mother, help me to be faithful to thy Son, Who has loved me so much.

Thursday—Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR LAST END.

Consider it well and say to thyself : I have a soul and if I lose it, all is lost ! I have a soul, and if I were to gain the whole world and in the end lose that soul, what would the gaining of the world profit me then ? For where are now the dignities, the pleasures, the luxuries of all those great ones of the world whose bodies are mouldering in the dust, and whose souls are a prey to the fires of hell ? My salvation is, therefore, of the highest importance to me, for eternal happiness is at stake.

I.

Consider, O man, how important it is to you to save your soul. Your dearest interests are there concerned, because, if you attain salvation, you will be eternally happy in the enjoyment of every good both of soul and body; but, in losing your soul, you lose your soul and body; Heaven and God for ever. You will be eternally miserable, eternally damned. Your only important, your only necessary affair, therefore, is to serve your God and to save your soul. Do not, then, O Christian, think of serving your passions now, and of giving yourself to God hereafter. Oh, how many has this false and deceitful hope precipitated into hell ! Thousands of sinners have flattered themselves with the hope of future repentance; but the day for which they hoped never arrived, and they are now suffering without remedy the

torments of the damned. And who amongst them all ever thought of falling into that place of woe? Which of them had not the intention of saving his soul? But God curses him that sins in the hope of pardon. You say perhaps, within yourself, I will commit this sin and then repent: but are you sure that time will be allowed you for repentance? You may die the moment you have sinned. By sinning you lose the grace of God; and what if you never more recover it? God shows mercy to those who fear Him—(Luke i. 50), but not to those who contemn and despise Him. Think not, therefore, that it will cost you no more to repent of and confess three sins than to repent of and confess one sin. No: in this thought you are deceived; God might pardon you a first or a second sin, but not a third. He has patience with the sinner for a time, but not forever when the time comes. When the measure of iniquity is filled up, His mercy ceases, and He punishes the impenitent sinner either by death, or by abandoning him to a reprobate sense, in which state he goes on from sin to sin without remorse, and at length is precipitated into hell. O Christian, attend seriously to this. It is time you should put an end to your disorders and return to God; you should fear lest this may be the last warning that He will ever send you. You have offended Him long enough, and He has borne with you long enough. Tremble, then, lest God should forsake you after the next mortal sin. Oh! how many souls has this striking thought of eternity caused to retire from the disorders and dangers of the world, to live in cloisters, solitudes, and deserts! Unfortunate sinner that I have been! what is the fruit of all my crimes?—a conscience gnawed with despair, a troubled heart, a soul overwhelmed with grief, hell deserved, and God lost! Ah! my God, my heavenly Father, bind me to Thy love!

II.

Consider, O man, that this affair of eternity is the most neglected of all affairs. Men have time to think

of everything but God and salvation. If a man of the world is advised to frequent the Sacraments, or to spend a quarter of an hour daily in Meditation, he will immediately say : I have a family to provide for; I have my business to attend to; I have quite sufficient to keep me busy. Good God! and have you not a soul to save? Will your riches and your family be able to assist you at the hour of your death, or deliver you from hell if you are condemned? No, no; flatter yourself not that you are able to reconcile God and the world, Heaven and sin. Salvation is not to be attained by a life of indolence and ease. It is necessary to use violence and to make great efforts in order to obtain the crown of immortality. How many Christians have flattered themselves with the idea of serving God and saving their souls hereafter, and are at this moment, and will forever be, in the flames of hell! How great is the folly of men in attending to what will so shortly terminate, and thinking so little of that state which will never end! Ah, Christian, put your affairs in order. Reflect that your all is at stake : remember that, in a very short time, your body will be deposited in the earth ,and your soul will go to dwell in the house of eternity. How dreadful, then, will be your misfortune if you are condemned to an eternity of woe! Reflect well on this now, for then you shall find no remedy.

O my God, I am forced to acknowledge with shame and confusion that I have hitherto blindly wandered astray from Thee! I have scarcely ever thought seriously of saving my soul. O God, my Father, save me, through Jesus Christ. I am willing to part with everything here, provided I do not lose Thee. O Mary, my surest hope, save me by thy powerful intercession.

Spiritual Reading

6.—"*WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH.*"

Let us pass to consider the greatness of the fidelity with which Mary immediately corresponded to Divine grace.

It is not a private opinion only, says a learned author, Father La Colombiere, but it is the opinion of all, that the holy child, when she received sanctifying grace in the womb of St. Anne, received also the perfect use of her reason, and was also divinely enlightened, in a degree corresponding to the grace with which she was enriched. So that we may well believe that from the first moment that her beautiful soul was united to her most pure body, she, by the light she had received from the wisdom of God, knew well the eternal truths, the beauty of virtue, and, above all, the infinite goodness of God; and how much He deserved to be loved by all, and particularly by herself, on account of the singular gifts with which He had adorned and distinguished her above all creatures, by preserving her from the stain of original sin, by bestowing on her so immense graces and destining her to be the Mother of the Eternal Word, and Queen of the universe.

Hence from that first moment Mary, grateful to God, began to do all that she could do, by immediately and faithfully trafficking with that great capital of grace which had been bestowed upon her; and applying herself entirely to please and love the Divine goodness. She from that moment, loved God with all her strength, and continued thus to love Him always, during the whole of the nine months preceding her birth, during which she never ceased for a moment to unite herself more and more closely to God by fervent acts of love.

She was already free from original sin, and hence

was exempt from every earthly affection, from every irregular movement, from every distraction from every opposition on the part of the senses, which could in any way have hindered her from always advancing more and more in Divine love : her senses also concurred with her blessed spirit in tending towards God. Hence her beautiful soul, free from every impediment, never lingered, but always flew towards God, always loved Him, and always increased in love towards Him.

It was for this reason that she called herself a plane-tree, planted by flowing waters : *As a plane-tree by the waters . . . was I exalted*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 19). For she was that noble plant of God which always grew close by the streams of Divine grace. And therefore she also calls herself a vine : *As a vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 23). Not only because she was so humble in the eyes of the world, but because she was like the vine, which, according to the common proverb, "never ceases to grow." Other trees—the orange-tree, the mulberry, the pear-tree—have a determined height, which they attain; but the vine always grows, and grows to the height of the tree to which it is attached. And thus did the most Blessed Virgin always grow in perfection. "Hail, then, O vine, always growing!" says St. Gregory Thaumaturgus; for she was always united to God, on Whom alone she depended. Hence it was of her that the Holy Ghost spoke, saying, *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?* —(Cant. viii. 5), which St. Ambroses thus paraphrases : "She it is that cometh up, clinging to the Eternal Word, as a vine to a vine-stock." Who is this accompanied by the Divine Word, that grows as a vine planted against a great tree?

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

I.

And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit--(Luke xxiii. 46).

Eutychius says that Jesus uttered these words with a loud voice that all hearing Him calling upon God His Father, all might understand He was the true Son of God. But St. John Chrysostom writes that Jesus cried with a loud voice to teach us that He did not die of necessity, but of His own free will, uttering so strong a voice at the very moment when He was so weak and about to end His life. This was in conformity with what Jesus had said during His life, that He voluntarily sacrificed His life for His sheep, and not through the will and malice of His enemies: *I lay down my life for my sheep . . . No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself*—(Jo. x. 15, 18).

St. Athanasius adds that Jesus Christ, in thus recommending Himself to the Father, recommended at the same time all the faithful, who through Him would obtain salvation, since the head with the members form one single body. On which the Saint remarks that Jesus then intended to repeat the prayer that He had before offered: *Holy Father, keep them in thy name . . . that they may be one, as we also are.* And then He added: *Father, I will that where I am they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me*—(Jo. xvii. 11, 24).

This made St. Paul say: *I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day*—(2 Tim. i. 12). Thus the Apostle wrote, while he was in prison, suffering for Jesus Christ, into whose hands he

committed the deposit of his sufferings, and of all his hopes, knowing how grateful and faithful Jesus is to those who suffer for His love.

II.

David placed all his hopes in the future Redeemer when he said : *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth*—(Ps. xxx. 6). And how much more ought not we to trust in Jesus Christ, Who has now completed our Redemption? Let us pray with great confidence : *Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord! Into thy hands I commend my spirit! Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!* Great comfort do these words bring to the dying at the moment of death, against the temptations of hell, and their fears on account of their sins.

But, O Jesus, my Redeemer! I will not wait for death to recommend my soul to Thee; I commend it to Thee now; suffer me not to turn my back upon Thee again. I see that my past life has served only to dishonour Thee. Suffer me not to continue to displease Thee for the days that yet remain. O Lamb of God, sacrificed upon the Cross, and dead for me as a Victim of love, and consumed by sorrows, grant by the merits of Thy death that I may love Thee with all my heart, and be wholly Thine whilst life remains. And when I shall reach the end of my days, grant me to die burning with love for Thee. Thou hast died through love of me : I would die for love of Thee. Thou hast given Thyself wholly to me; I give myself wholly to Thee : *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth!* Thou hast poured forth all Thy Blood; Thou hast given Thy life to save me; suffer not that through my fault all this should be lost to me. O my Jesus, I love Thee, and I hope through Thy merits that I shall love Thee forever. *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded*—(Ps. xxx. 2).

O Mary, Mother of God, I trust in thy prayers; pray that I may live and die faithful to thy Son. To thee I would say, with St. Bonaventure: "In thee, O Lady, have I hoped; I shall never be confounded."

Friday—Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MORTAL SIN.

The wicked have said to God: *Depart from us!* —(Job xxi. 14). When a man consents to mortal sin he says to God: "Go out from my soul, O Lord, and make room for Satan!" Our Blessed Lord complained to St. Bridget, saying: "I am like a monarch banished from his dominions, and on my throne is placed the vilest of plunderers!"

I.

Consider, O my soul, that having been created to love God you rebelled against Him and thereby have been guilty of the basest ingratitude. You have treated Him as an enemy; you have despised His grace and friendship. You were aware how much sin offends Him, and still you committed it. Yes, you turned your back on God; you insulted Him; you have in a manner raised your hand to strike Him; you have grieved His Holy Spirit. The man who sins says to God, if not in words, at least in effect: Depart from me: I will not serve Thee, I will not acknowledge Thee for my God: the god whom I adore is this pleasure of mine, this

interest, this revenge. Such has been the language of your heart every time that you preferred any creature to God.

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi could not conceive how a Christian could knowingly commit a mortal sin. O you who are reading these lines, what are your sentiments? How many mortal sins have you committed? O my God, pardon me; have mercy on me. I detest all my sins; I love Thee, and grieve sincerely for the insults I have offered to Thee Who art deserving of infinite love.

God spoke to your heart at the moment you were offending Him: "My Son, I am your God Who created you, and redeemed you with the price of My Blood. I command you, then, not to commit that sin under pain of incurring My eternal displeasure. But in yielding to the temptation you have replied: Lord, I will not obey Thee; I am resolved to gratify my passions; I value not Thy friendship. *Thou saidst: I will not serve*—(Jer. ii. 20). Ah! my God, and this I have done many, perhaps a thousand times. How couldst Thou bear with my insults? Why did I not die rather than live to offend Thee? But, O infinite Goodness, I will do so no more; henceforth I will love Thee with all my heart. Give me perseverance; give me Thy holy love.

II.

Consider, O my soul, that, when sins reach a certain number, they cause God to abandon the sinner. *The Lord patiently expecteth that when the day of judgment shall come, he may punish them in the fulness of sins*—(2 Mach. vi. 14). If, therefore, you are again tempted to return to your sins, say no more within yourself: I will commit this one, and will repent. For what if the Lord should instantly strike you dead? Or what if He should forsake you forever? What has been the fate of thousands who have thus lost the grace of God? They flattered themselves with the hope of pardon; but death surprised them, and hell enveloped

them in its fires. Tremble, then, lest your fate be the same. Those who abuse the goodness of God in order to offend Him are not deserving of His Mercy. After the multitude of crimes that He has pardoned, you have too much reason to fear that, if you relapse into another mortal sin, He will pardon you no more. Thank Him, then, a thousand times for having borne patiently with you until now, and form the resolution rather to die than to offend Him any more. Say frequently to Him: My God, I have already offended Thee enough: the remainder of my life shall be spent in loving Thee and in bewailing my past ingratitude. O my Jesus, I wish to love Thee; grant me the grace to do so. O Blessed Virgin, my Mother, assist me by thy prayers. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

7.—"*WHEN I WAS A LITTLE ONE I PLEASED THE MOST HIGH.*"

Many learned Theologians say that a soul that possesses a habit of virtue, as long as it corresponds faithfully to the actual grace which it receives from God, always produces an act equal in intensity to the habit it possesses; so much so that it acquires each time a new and double merit, equal to the sum of all the merits previously acquired. This kind of augmentation was, it is said, granted to the Angels in the time of their probation; and if it was granted to the Angels, who can ever deny that it was granted to the Divine Mother when living in this world, and especially during the time of which I speak, that she was in the womb of her mother, in which she was certainly more faithful than the Angels in corresponding to Divine grace? Mary, then, during the whole of that time, in each moment, doubled that sublime grace which she possessed from the first instant; for, corresponding with her whole strength, and in the

most perfect manner in her every act, she subsequently doubled her merits in every instance. So that, supposing she had a thousand degrees of grace in the first instant, in the second she had two thousand, in the third four thousand, in the fourth eight thousand, in the fifth sixteen thousand, in the sixth thirty-two thousand. And we are as yet only at the sixth instant; but multiplied thus for an entire day, multiplied for nine months, consider what treasures of grace, merit, and sanctity Mary had already acquired at the moment of her birth!

Let us, then, rejoice with our beloved infant Mary, who was born so holy, so dear to God, and so full of grace. And let us rejoice, not only on her account, but also on our own; for she came into the world full of grace, not only for her own glory, but also for our good. St. Thomas remarks that the most Blessed Virgin was full of grace in three ways: first, she was filled with grace as to her soul, so that from the beginning her beautiful soul belonged all to God. Secondly, she was filled with grace as to her body, so that she merited to clothe the Eternal Word with her most pure flesh. Thirdly, she was filled with grace for the benefit of all, so that all men might partake of it. The Angelical Doctor adds that some Saints have so much grace that it is not only sufficient for themselves, but also for the salvation of many, though not for all men; only to Jesus Christ and to Mary was such a grace given as sufficed to save all: "Should any one have as much as would suffice for the salvation of all, this would be the greatest: and this was in Christ and in the Blessed Virgin. So that what St. John (i. 16) says of Jesus: *And of his fulness we all have received*, the Saints say of Mary. St. Thomas of Villanova calls her "full of grace, of whose plenitude all receive"; so much so that St. Anselm says that "there is no one who does not partake of the grace of Mary." And who is there in the world to whom Mary is not benign, and does not dispense some mercy? Who was ever found to whom the Blessed Virgin was not propitious? Who is there whom her mercy does not reach?

From Jesus, however, it is that we receive grace as the Author of grace, from Mary as a Mediatress; from Jesus as a Saviour, from Mary as an Advocate; from Jesus as a Source, from Mary as a Channel. Hence St. Bernard says that God established Mary as the channel of the mercies that He wished to dispense to men; therefore He filled her with grace, that each one's part might be communicated to Him from her fulness: "A full aqueduct, that others may receive of her fulness, but not fulness itself." Therefore the Saint exhorts all to consider with how much love God wills that we should honour this great Virgin, since He has deposited the whole treasure of His graces in her; so that whatever we possess of hope, grace, and salvation, we may thank our most loving Queen for all, since all comes to us from her hands and by her powerful intercession. The Saint thus beautifully expresses himself: "Behold with what tender feelings of devotion God wills that we should honour her! He has placed the plenitude of all good in Mary, that thus, if we have any hope, or anything salutary in us, we may know that it was from her that it overflowed."

Miserable is that soul that closes this channel of grace against itself by neglecting to recommend itself to Mary! When Holofernes wished to gain possession of the city of Bethulia, he took care to destroy the aqueducts: *He commanded their aqueduct to be cut off*—(Judith vii. 6). And this the devil does when he wishes to become master of a soul; he causes it to give up devotion to the most Blessed Virgin Mary; and when once this channel is closed, it easily loses supernatural light, the fear of God, and finally eternal salvation.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

St. John writes that our Redeemer, before He breathed His last, bowed His head. He bowed His head as a sign that He accepted death with full submission from the hands of His Father, and thus accomplished the most humble obedience : *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*—(Phil. ii. 8).

Jesus upon the Cross, with His hands and feet nailed could move no part of His body except His head. St. Athanasius says that death did not dare to approach to take away life from the Author of life; wherefore it was needed that He Himself, by bowing His head (which alone He then could move), should call death to approach and slay Him. On St. Matthew's words : *Jesus again crying with a loud voice yielded up the ghost*—(Matt. xxvii. 50), St. Ambrose remarks that the Evangelist used the expression *yielded up* to show that Jesus did not die of necessity, or through the violence of the executioners, but because He voluntarily chose to die. He chose willingly to die, to save man from the eternal death to which he was condemned.

This was already foretold by the Prophet Osee in the words : *I will deliver them out of the hand of death. I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite*—(Osee xiii. 14). This is testified by the holy Fathers St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Gregory; and St. Paul, as we have seen, applies the Prophecy literally to Jesus Christ, Who, with His death delivered us from death, that is, from hell.

Draw near, O my soul, to the foot of the Altar of the Cross whereon the Lamb of God is now lying dead,

sacrificed for thy salvation. He is dead for the love He bore thee! Speak to thy dead Lord. O Jesus, behold to what Thy love for man has at length reduced Thee! I thank Thee for all men, especially for myself. Into Thy wounded hands I commend my poor soul. May I die for the love of Thy love who didst vouchsafe to die for the love of my love!

II.

How, then, was Jesus Christ the death of death? *O death, I will be thy death!* Because by His death our Saviour conquered death, and destroyed the death which had resulted from sin. Therefore the Apostle writes, *Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin*—(1 Cor. xv. 54-56). Jesus, the Divine Lamb, by His death destroyed sin, which was the cause of our death; and this was the victory of Jesus, since by dying He banished sin from the world, and consequently delivered it from eternal death, to which the entire human race was subjected.

To this corresponds that other text of the Apostle: *That through death he might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is, the devil*—(Heb. ii. 14). Jesus destroyed the devil, that is, the power of the devil, who, through sin, had the power of death; that is, who had power to inflict temporal and eternal death on all the sons of Adam who were corrupted with sin. This was the victory of the Cross, on which Jesus, the Author of life, acquired life for us by His very death. Whence the Church sings of the Cross that by it "Life endured death, and by death brought forth life."

And all this was the work of the Divine Love, which brought this Priest to sacrifice to the Eternal Father the life of His only-begotten Son for the salvation of men; for which reason the Church also sings, "The Priest, who is love, sacrifices the limbs of His tender body."

And therefore St. Francis of Sales cries out: "Let us look upon this Divine Saviour stretched upon the Cross,

as upon the altar of His love, where He dies for love of us. Ah, why do we not cast ourselves in spirit upon the same, that we may die upon the Cross with Him Who has been willing to die for love of us?"

Yes, O my sweet Redeemer, I embrace Thy Cross; and holding it in my embrace, I would live and die ever lovingly kissing Thy feet, wounded and pierced for me.

Saturday—Thirteenth Week after Pentecost

(The Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary)

Morning Meditation

THE SWEETNESS OF THE NAME OF MARY.

The great name of Mary, which was given to the Divine Mother, did not come to her from her parents, nor was it given to her by the mind or will of man, as is the case with other names given to children, but it came from Heaven, as many of the Holy Fathers tell us, and was given by a Divine ordinance. "The name of Mary came from the treasury of the Divinity."

1.

The great name of Mary, which was given to the Divine Mother, did not come to her from her parents, nor was it given to her by the mind or will of man, as is the case with other names given to children, but it

came from Heaven, as many of the Holy Fathers tell us, and was given by a Divine ordinance. "The name of Mary came from the treasury of the Divinity." This is attested by St. Jerome, St. Epiphanius, St. Antoninus, St. Peter Damian, and many others. Ah, yes, O Mary, it was from that treasury that thy high and admirable name came forth; for the most Blessed Trinity, says Richard of St. Laurence, bestowed on thee a name above every other name after that of thy Son, and ennobled it with such majesty and power that He willed that all Heaven, earth, and hell, on only hearing it, should fall down and venerate it; but I will give the author's own words: "The whole Trinity, O Mary, gave thee a name after that of thy Son above every other name, that in thy name every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth." But among the many privileges of the name of Mary, and which were given to it by God, we will now examine that of the peculiar sweetness found in it by the servants of this most holy Lady during life and in death.

The holy anchorite Honorius used to say that "this name of Mary is filled with every sweetness and Divine savour"; so much so, that the glorious St. Anthony of Padua found the same sweetness in the name of Mary that St. Bernard found in that of Jesus. "Name of Jesus!" exclaimed the one. "O name of Mary!" replied the other; "joy in the heart, honey in the mouth, melody to the ear of her devout clients." It is narrated in the life of the Venerable Juvenal Ancina, Bishop of Saluzzo, that in pronouncing the name of Mary he tasted so great and sensible a sweetness, that, after doing so, he licked his lips. We read also that a lady at Cologne told the Bishop Massilius that as often as she pronounced the name of Mary she experienced a taste far sweeter than honey. The Bishop imitated her, and experienced the same thing.

O great Mother of God and my Mother Mary, it is true that I am unworthy to name thee; but thou, who lovest me and desirest my salvation, must, notwithstanding the unworthiness of my tongue, grant that I

may always invoke thy most holy and powerful name in my necessities, for thy name is the succour of the living and the salvation of the dying. Ah, Mary most pure, Mary most sweet, grant that henceforth thy name may be the very breath of my life. O Lady, delay not to help me when I invoke thee, for in all the temptations which assail me, and in all my wants, I will never cease calling upon thee, and repeating again and again: Mary! Mary! Thus I hope to act during my life, and particularly at my death, that after the last struggle I may eternally praise thy beloved name in Heaven, O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary.

II.

We gather from the Sacred Canticles, that on the Assumption of our Blessed Lady, the Angels asked her name three times. *Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke?*—(Cant. iii. 6). Again: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?*—(Cant. vi. 9). And again: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights?*—(Cant. viii. 5). "And why," asks Richard of St. Laurence, "do the Angels so often ask the name of their Queen?" He answers: "It was so sweet even to the Angels to hear it pronounced, that they desired to hear that sweet name in reply."

But here I do not intend to speak of that sensible sweetness, for it is not granted to all; I speak of that salutary sweetness of consolation, of love, of joy, of confidence, of strength, which the name of Mary ordinarily brings to those who pronounce it with devotion.

The Abbot Francone, speaking on this subject, says, "there is no other name after that of the Son, in Heaven or on earth, whence pious minds derive so much grace, hope and sweetness." After the most sacred Name of Jesus, the name of Mary is so rich in every good thing that on earth and in heaven there is no other from which devout souls receive so much grace, hope, and sweetness. "For," he continues, "there is something

so admirable, sweet, and Divine in this name of Mary that when it meets with friendly hearts it breathes into them an odour of delightful sweetness." And he adds, in conclusion, "that the wonder of this great name is that if heard pronounced by the lovers of Mary a thousand times, it is always heard again with renewed pleasure, for they always experience the same sweetness each time they hear it."

Ah, Mary, most amiable Mary, what consolation, what sweetness, what confidence, what tenderness does my soul feel in the mere mention of thy name, in the very thought of thee! I thank my Lord and God Who for my good has given thee a name so sweet, so deserving of love, and at the same time so powerful. But, my sovereign Lady, I am not satisfied with only naming thee, I wish to do so out of love: I desire that my love may every hour remind me to call on thee, so that I may be able to exclaim with St. Bonaventure: "O name of the Mother of God, thou art my love! My own dear Mary, O my beloved Jesus, may your most sweet Names reign in my heart, and in all hearts! Grant that I may forget all others to remember, and always invoke, your adorable Names alone. Ah! Jesus, my Redeemer, and Mary my Mother, when the moment of death comes and I must breathe forth my soul and leave this world, deign to grant that my last words may be: I love Thee, O Jesus! I love thee, O Mary! To you do I give my heart and my soul!"

Spiritual Reading

"*FOR A MAN IS KNOWN BY HIS CHILDREN.*"

It is certain that a child's good or evil conduct in life depends on his being brought up well or ill. Nature itself teaches every parent to attend to the education of his offspring. He who has given them being ought to

endeavour to make life useful to them. God gives children to parents, not that they may assist the family, but that they may be brought up in the fear and love of God, and be directed in the way of eternal salvation. "We have," says St. John Chrysostom, "a great deposit in children; let us attend to them with great care." Children have not been given to parents as a gift which they may dispose of as they please, but as a trust, for which, if lost through their negligence, they must render an account to God. The Scripture tells us that when a father observes the Divine law, both he and his children shall prosper. *That it may be well with thee and thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is pleasing in the sight of God*—(Deut. xii. 25). The good or bad conduct of a parent may be known from the kind of life his children lead. *For by the fruit the tree is known*—(Matt. xii. 33). A father who leaves a family, when he departs this life, is as if he had not died; because his children remain, and exhibit his habits and character. *His father is dead, and he is as if he were not dead; for he hath left one behind him that is like himself*—(Ecclus. xxx. 4). When we find a son addicted to blasphemies, to obscenities, and to theft, we have reason to suspect that such, too, was the character of the father. *For a man is known by his children*—(Ecclus. xi. 30).

Hence Origen says that on the Day of Judgment parents shall have to render an account for all the sins of their children. Hence, he who teaches his son to live well, shall die a happy and tranquil death. *He that teacheth his son . . . when he died he was not sorrowful, neither was he confounded before his enemies* —(Ecclus. xxx. 3-5). And he shall save his soul by means of his children; that is, by the virtuous education he has given them. *She shall be saved through child-bearing*—(1 Tim. ii. 15). But, on the other hand, a very uneasy and unhappy death shall be the lot of those who have laboured only to increase the possessions, or to multiply the honours of their family; or who have sought only to lead a life of ease and pleasure,

but have not watched over the morals of their children. St. Paul says that such parents are worse than infidels. *But if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*—(1 Tim. v. 8). Were fathers or mothers to lead a life of piety and continual prayer, and to communicate every day, they would be damned if they neglected the care of their children. Would to God that certain parents paid as much attention to their children as they do to their horses! How careful are they to see that their horses are fed and well trained! And they take no pains to make their children attend to Catechism, hear Mass, or go to Confession. "We take more care," says St. John Chrysostom, "of mules and horses than of the children."

If all fathers fulfilled their duty of watching after the education of their children, we should have but few crimes and few death penalties. By the bad education parents give to their offspring, they cause their children, says St. John Chrysostom, to rush into many grievous vices; and thus they deliver them up to the hands of the executioner. Hence, in Lacedemon, a parent, as being the cause of all the irregularities of his children, was justly punished for their crimes with greater severity than the children themselves. Great, indeed, is the misfortune of the child whose parents are vicious and incapable of bringing up their children in the fear of God, and who, when they see their children engaged in dangerous friendships and in quarrels, instead of correcting and chastising them, rather take compassion on them and say: "What can be done? They are young and must take their course." Oh what wicked maxims! What a cruel education! Do you hope that when your children grow up they will become holy? Listen to what Solomon says: *A young man, according to his way. Even when he is old, he will not depart from it*—(Prov. xxii. 6). A young man who has contracted a habit of sin will not abandon it even in his old age. *His bones*, says Job, *shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust*—(Job xx. 11).

When a young person has lived in evil habits, his bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, so that he will carry them with him to death; and the impurities, blasphemies and hatred to which he was accustomed in his youth will accompany him to the grave, and sleep with him after his bones shall be reduced to dust and ashes. It is very easy, when they are young, to train up children to habits of virtue; but, when they have come to manhood, it is just as difficult to correct them, if they have learned habits of vice.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Let us pause awhile to contemplate our Redeemer dead upon the Cross. Let us pray to His Divine Father—O Eternal Father, *look on the face of thy Christ!*—(Ps. lxxxiii. 10). Look upon this Thy only-begotten Son, Who, in order to satisfy Thy will that lost man should be saved, came down upon earth, took human nature, and with that flesh took upon Himself all our miseries, save sin. In a word, He made Himself man, and lived all His life among men as the poorest, the most despised, the most suffering of all; in the end He was condemned to death, as Thou seest Him, after these very men had torn His flesh with scourgings, wounded His head with thorns, and pierced His hands and feet with nails upon the Cross. Thus He died on this tree of unmixed anguish, despised as the vilest of men, derided as a false prophet, blasphemed as a sacrilegious impostor for having said that He was Thy Son, and condemned to die as one of the most guilty of malefactors. Thou Thyself didst give Him up to

endure this terrible and desolate death, depriving Him of all relief. Tell us, what fault did Thy beloved Son commit that He should deserve so horrible a punishment? Thou knowest His innocence and His sanctity; why hast Thou thus treated Him? O my God, I hear Thee reply: *For the wickedness of my people have I struck him*—(Is. liii. 8). My Son did not deserve, He could not deserve any punishment, being innocence and holiness itself. The punishment was due to you for your sins by which you deserved eternal death; and that I might not see you, the beloved creatures of My hand, lost eternally, to deliver you from so dreadful a destruction, I gave up this My Son to so mournful a life and to so bitter a death. Think, O men, to what an excess I have loved you. *God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son*—(Jo. iii. 16).

II.

My soul, turn to Jesus dead upon the Cross. O Jesus, my Redeemer, I behold Thee upon this Cross, pale and desolate; Thou speakest no more, nor breathest, for Thou no longer livest: Thou hast no more Blood, for Thou hast poured forth it all, as Thou didst Thyself foretell: *This is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many*—(Mark xiv. 24). Thou hast no longer life, for Thou didst sacrifice it in order to give life to my soul, which was dead through its sins. But why didst Thou give up Thy life and pour forth Thy Blood for us miserable sinners? Behold, St. Paul tells us: *He loved us and delivered himself for us*—(Eph. v. 2).

And there at the foot of the Cross stands Mary the Mother of Jesus, watching her Son! Her Son! But, O God, what a Son! A Son Who was, at one and the same time, her Son and her God! A Son Who had from all eternity chosen her to be His Mother, and had given her a preference in His love before all mankind and all the Angels! A Son so beautiful, so holy, and so lovely; a Son Who had been ever obedient unto

her; a Son Who was her one and only Love, and she had to see such a Son die of pain before her very eyes! O Mary, O Mother, most afflicted of all mothers, I compassionate thy heart more especially when thou didst behold thy Jesus surrender Himself to death on the Cross, open His mouth, and expire; and, for love of this thy Son, now dead for my salvation, do thou recommend unto Him my soul. And do Thou, my Jesus, for the sake of the merits of Mary's sorrows, have mercy upon me, and grant me the grace of dying for Thee, as Thou hast died for me: 'May I die, O my Lord,' will I say unto Thee with St. Francis of Assisi, 'for love of the love of Thee, Who hast vouchsafed to die for love of the love of me.'

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

ALL ENDS AND SOON ENDS.

The grass of the field which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven—(Matt. vi. 30). Behold, the goods of the earth are like *the grass of the field*, which to-day is blooming and beautiful, but by the evening withers, and its flowers fade, and the next day it is cast into the fire! *All flesh is grass and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field.*

I.

Behold, the goods of the earth are like the grass of the field, which to-day is blooming and beautiful, but

by the evening it withers and its flowers fade, and the next day it is cast into the fire. This is what God commanded the Prophet Isaias to preach: *Cry. And I said: What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field*—(Is. xl. 6). Hence St. James compares the rich ones of this world to the flower of the grass: at the end of their journey through life they rot, and all their riches and grandeurs with them. *The flower of the grass shall he pass away. For the sun rose with a burning heat, and parched the grass, and the flower thereof fell off, and the beauty of the shape thereof perished: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways*—(James i. 10, 11). They fade away and are cast into the fire, like the rich glutton, who made a splendid appearance in this life but afterwards was buried in hell.

Let us, then, dearly beloved Christian, attend to the salvation of our souls, and to the acquisition of riches for eternity, which never ends; for everything in this world ends, and ends very soon.

When some great one of this world is in the full enjoyment of the riches and honours he has acquired, death shall come, and he shall be told: *Take order with thy house; for thou shalt die, and not live*—(Is. xxxviii. 1). Oh, what doleful tidings! The unhappy man must then say: Farewell, O world! Farewell, O my villa! Farewell, O my beautiful gardens! Farewell, relatives and friends! Farewell sports and balls! Farewell, festivities and banquets! Farewell, honours! All is over for me! There is no remedy: whether he will or not he must leave all. *For when he shall die, he shall take nothing away; nor shall his glory descend with him*—(Ps. xlviii. 18). St. Bernard says that death produces a horrible separation of the soul from the body, and from all the things of this earth. *Opus mortis, horrendum divortium.* To the great of this world, whom worldlings regard as the most fortunate of mortals, the bare mention of death is so full of bitterness that they are unwilling even to hear it mentioned; for

their entire concern is to find peace in their earthly goods. *O death!* says Ecclesiasticus, *how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions*—(Ecclus. xli. 1).

O my Jesus I give Thee thanks for having waited for me and for not having called me out of this world in my sins. During the remainder of my life I will weep over my iniquities. I will love Thee with all my strength. I know I must die, and by Thy grace I will prepare to die a happy death.

II.

If the bare mention of death is full of bitterness, how much greater bitterness shall death itself cause when it actually comes. Miserable the man who is attached to the goods of this world! Every separation produces pain. Hence, when the soul shall be separated by the stroke of death from the goods on which it had fixed all its affections, the pain must be excruciating. It was this that made king Agag exclaim, when the news of approaching death was announced to him: *Doth bitter death separate in this manner?*—(1 Kings xv. 32). The great misfortune of worldlings is that when they are on the point of being summoned to Judgment, instead of endeavouring to adjust the account of their souls, they direct all their attention to earthly things. But, says St. John Chrysostom, the punishment which awaits the sinner on account of having forgotten God during life is that at the hour of death he forgets himself.

But how great soever a man's attachment to the things of this world may be, he must take leave of them at death. Naked he has entered into this world, and naked he shall depart from it. *Naked*, says Job, *I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither*—(Job i. 21.). In a word, they who have spent their whole life sacrificing sleep, health, and their very soul in accumulating riches and possessions, shall take nothing with them at the hour of death. Their

eyes shall then be opened, and of all they had so dearly acquired, they shall find nothing in their hands. Hence, on that night of confusion, they shall be overwhelmed in a tempest of pains and sadness. *The rich man, when he shall sleep, shall take away nothing with him. He shall open his eyes and find nothing; . . . a tempest shall oppress him in the night*—(Job xxvii. 19-20).

St. Antoninus relates that Saladin, king of the Saracens, gave orders at the hour of death that the winding-sheet in which he was to be buried should be carried before him to the grave, and that a person should cry out: "Of all his possessions, only this shall Saladin bring with him." The Saint also relates that a certain philosopher, speaking of Alexander the Great after his death, said: "Behold the man that made the earth tremble!" *The earth*, as the Scripture says, *was quiet before him.* He is now under the earth. Behold the man whom the dominion of the whole world could not satisfy: now six feet of earth is sufficient for him. An ancient writer says that having gone to see the tomb of Caesar, he exclaimed: "Princes feared thee; cities worshipped thee; all trembled before thee; whither has thy magnificence gone?" Listen to what David says: *I have seen the wicked highly exalted and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus. And I passed by, and lo! he was not*—(Ps. xxxvi. 35-36). Oh, how many such spectacles are seen every day in the world! A sinner who had been born in lowliness and poverty afterwards acquires wealth and honours, so as to excite the envy of all. When he dies, men say: He made a fortune in the world; but now he is dead, and with death all is over for him!

Spiritual Reading

DANGERS TO SALVATION.

A boat on the waves of the sea represents man in this world. As a vessel on the sea is exposed to a thousand dangers—to pirates, to quicksands, to hidden rocks, and to tempests, so man in this life is encompassed with perils arising from the temptations of hell—from the occasions of sin, from the scandals or bad counsels of men, from human respect, and, above all, from the bad passions of corrupt nature, represented by the winds that agitate the sea and expose the vessel to great danger of being lost.

St. Leo says our life is full of dangers, of snares, and of enemies. The first enemy of the salvation of every Christian is his own corruption. *But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured*—(James i. 14).

Along with the corrupt inclinations within us that drag us to evil, we have many enemies from without that fight against us. We have the devils, with whom the contest is very difficult, because they are stronger than we are. Hence, because we have to contend with powerful enemies, St. Paul exhorts us to arm ourselves with the Divine aid : *Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places*—(Ephes. vi. 11-12). The devil, according to St. Peter, is a lion continually going about roaring with rage and hunger for our souls. *Your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour*—(1 Pet. v. 8). St. Cyprian says that Satan is continually lying in wait for us in order to make us his slaves.

Even the men with whom we must converse endanger

our salvation. They persecute or betray us, or they deceive us by their flattery and wicked counsels. St. Augustine says that among the faithful there are in every profession insincere and deceitful men. Now if a fortress were full of rebels within, and encompassed by enemies without, who would not regard it as lost? Such is the condition of each of us as long as we live in this world. Who shall be able to deliver us from so many powerful enemies? Only God: *Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it* —(Ps. cxxvi. 1).

What, then, is the means by which we can save our souls in the midst of so many dangers? It is to imitate the holy disciples—to have recourse to our Divine Master, and to say to Him: *Lord, save us; we perish —Domine, salva nos; perimus.* Save us, O Lord; if Thou dost not, we are lost. When the tempest is violent, the pilot never takes his eyes from the light which guides him to the port. In like manner we should keep our eyes always turned to God Who alone can deliver us from the many dangers to which we are exposed. It was thus David acted when he found himself assailed by the dangers of sin. *I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me*—(Ps. cxx. 1). To teach us to recommend ourselves continually to Him who alone can save us by His grace, the Lord has ordained that, as long as we remain on this earth we shall have to live in the midst of a continual tempest and be surrounded by enemies. The temptations of the devil, the persecutions of men, the adversity which we suffer in this world, are not evils; they are, on the contrary, advantages, if we know how to use them as God wishes, Who sends or permits them for our welfare. They detach our affections from this earth, and inspire a disgust for this world, by making us feel bitterness and thorns even in its honours, its riches, its delights, and amusements. The Lord permits all these apparent evils, that we may take away our affections from fading goods, in which we meet with so many dangers of perdition, and that

we may seek to unite ourselves with Him Who alone can make us happy.

The error and mistake is that when we find ourselves harassed by infirmities, poverty, persecutions, and all such tribulations, instead of having recourse to the Lord, we turn to creatures and place our confidence in their assistance, and thus draw upon ourselves the maledictions of God, Who says: *Cursed be the man who trusteth in man*—(Jer. xvii. 5). The Lord does not forbid us in our afflictions and dangers to have recourse to human means; but He curses those who place their whole trust in them. He wishes us to have recourse to Himself before all others and to place our only hope in Him, so that we may also centre in Him all our love.

As long as we live on this earth, we must, according to St. Paul, work out our salvation with fear and trembling in the midst of the dangers by which we are beset. Whilst a certain vessel was in the open sea a great tempest arose which made the captain tremble. In the hold of the vessel there was an animal eating with as much tranquillity as if the sea were perfectly calm. The captain being asked why he was so much afraid, replied: "If I had a soul like the soul of that brute, I too would be tranquil and without fear; but because I have a rational and an immortal soul, I am afraid of death, after which I must appear before the Judgment-seat of God; and therefore I tremble through fear." Let us tremble. The salvation of our immortal souls is at stake. They who do not tremble, are, as St. Paul says, in great danger of being lost; because they who fear not, seldom recommend themselves to God, and labour but little to adopt the means of salvation. Let us beware, for we are, says St. Cyprian, still in the front of the fight, and combating for eternal salvation.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The Divine Priest, Jesus Christ, Who was both Priest and Victim, by the sacrifice of His life for the salvation of men completed the Sacrifice of the Cross and accomplished the work of the world's Redemption. By His death Jesus Christ stripped our death of its terrors. Until then it was but the punishment of rebels; but by grace and the merits of our Saviour it becomes a sacrifice so dear to God that when we unite it to the death of Jesus, it makes us worthy to enjoy the same glory that God enjoys, and to hear Him one day say to us, as we hope: *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!*—(Matt. xxv. 21).

Thus death, which was an object of pain and dread, was changed by the death of Jesus into a passage from a state of peril and danger of hell, into one of security and of eternal blessedness, and from the miseries of this life to the boundless delights of Paradise.

Therefore the Saints have ever regarded death with joy and desire, and no longer with fear. St. Augustine says that they who love the Crucified One "live with patience and die with joy." And common experience shows that they who in life have been most troubled with persecutions, temptations, scruples, or other painful events are in death most comforted by Jesus Crucified, conquering with great peace of mind all the terrors and pains of death. And if it has sometimes happened that some of the Saints, as we read in their Lives, died in great fear of death, the Lord God permitted this in order to increase their merits; because the more painful the sacrifice, the more acceptable it was to God, and the more profitable to them for eternity.

Oh, how much more bitter was death of old, before the time of the death of Jesus Christ! The Saviour was not yet come, and men sighed for His coming: they waited for His promise, but they knew not when it would be fulfilled. The devil had great power upon earth; Heaven was closed to men. But after the death of the Redeemer, hell was conquered. Divine grace was given to souls, God was reconciled to men, and the Kingdom of Heaven was opened to all those who die innocent, or have expiated their sins by repentance. And if some who die in grace do not immediately enter Heaven, this only results from the faults of which they are not yet cleansed; and death merely bursts their bonds, in order that they may be free to unite themselves perfectly to God, from Whom they are far away in this land of exile.

II.

Let us, then, take heed, O Christian souls, while we are in this exile, not to look at death as a misfortune, but as the end of our pilgrimage, which is full of difficulties and dangers, and as the beginning of our eternal happiness, which we hope one day to attain through the merits of Jesus Christ. And with this thought of Heaven, let us detach ourselves as much as possible from earthly things, which may cause us to lose Heaven and give us over to eternal pains. Let us offer ourselves to God declaring that we wish to die when it pleases Him, and to accept death in the manner and at the time which He has appointed; ever praying Him that, through the merits of Jesus Christ, He will cause us to depart from this life in His grace.

O my Jesus and my Saviour, Who, to obtain for me a happy death, hast chosen for Thyself a death so painful and desolate. I abandon myself into the arms of Thy mercy. For many years past I have deserved to be in hell, for the sins I have committed against Thee, and to be separated from Thee forever. But Thou, instead of punishing me as I deserved, hast called me to repentance, and I hope that now Thou hast pardoned me;

but if Thou hast not already pardoned me through my fault, pardon me now that in sorrow I ask for mercy at Thy feet. O my Jesus, I could die of grief when I think of the injuries I have offered Thee! "O Blood of the Innocent, wash away the sins of the penitent!" Pardon me, and give me grace to love Thee with all my strength till death; and when I shall reach the end of my life, make me to die burning with love for Thee, that I may continue to love Thee forever. Jesus, henceforth I unite my death to Thy holy death, through which I hope to be saved. *In thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded*—(Ps. xxx. 2).

O thou great Mother of God, next to Jesus thou art my hope. "In thee, O Lady, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded forever."

Monday—Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

EARNEST LABOUR FOR ETERNAL SALVATION.

"No security is too great where Eternity is at stake," says St. Bernard. We should, therefore, resolve: "I will save my soul, cost what it may!" Perish all things else—property, friends, even life itself, if I can but only save my soul!

I.

To be saved it is not sufficient to profess to do merely what is absolutely necessary. If, for example, a person wishes to avoid only mortal sins, without taking any

account of those which are venial, he will easily fall into mortal sins and lose his soul. He who desires to avoid only such dangers as are absolutely the immediate occasions of sin will most probably one day discover that he has fallen into grievous crimes and is lost. O my God, with what attention are the princes of this world served! Everything is avoided that can possibly give them the least offence for fear of losing their favour; but with what carelessness Thou art served! Everything that can endanger the life of the body is shunned with the greatest caution, while the dangers which threaten the life of the soul are not feared!

O my God, how negligently have I hitherto served Thee. Henceforth I will serve Thee with the greatest attention; be Thou my helper and assist me.

O my brother, if God should act as sparingly with you as you do with Him, what would become of you? If He should grant you only the grace barely sufficient —would you be saved? You would be able to obtain salvation, but you would not obtain it; because in this life temptations frequently occur so violent that it is morally impossible not to yield to them without a special assistance from God. But God does not afford His special assistance to those who deal sparingly with Him: *He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly*—(2 Cor. ix. 6).

But, O God, Thou hast not dealt sparingly with me: while I have been so ungrateful towards Thee as to repay Thy many favours with offences, Thou, instead of chastising me, hast redoubled Thy graces towards me. No, my God, I will never more be ungrateful to Thee, as I have hitherto been.

II.

To save our immortal souls is not an easy task, but a difficult, and indeed a very difficult one. We carry about us the rebellious flesh, which allures to the gratification of sense; and we have, moreover, numberless enemies to contend with in the world, in hell, and even

within our own selves, who are ever tempting us to evil. It is true, the grace of God is never wanting to us; but still this grace demands of us a hard struggle to overcome temptations, and fervent prayer in order to obtain more powerful assistance as the danger becomes greater.

O Jesus, I desire never more to be separated from Thee or deprived of Thy love. Hitherto I have been ungrateful to Thee and have turned my back upon Thee, but I will now love Thee with my whole soul, and fear nothing so much as to cease to love Thee. Thou knowest my weakness; assist me, therefore, Thou Who art my only hope and confidence. And thou, O ever-blessed Virgin Mary, cease not to intercede for me.

Spiritual Reading

DANGERS TO SALVATION.

A General Confession is a powerful help to a change of life. When the tempest is violent the burden of the vessel is diminished, and each person on board throws his goods into the sea in order to save the ship and save his life. O folly of sinners, who, in the midst of so great dangers of eternal perdition, instead of diminishing the burden of the vessel—that is, instead of unburdening the soul of her sins—load her with a greater weight. Instead of flying from the dangers of sin, they fearlessly continue to put themselves voluntarily into dangerous occasions; and, instead of having recourse to God's mercy for the pardon of their offences, they offend Him still more, and compel Him to abandon them.

Another means is to labour strenuously to prevent ourselves becoming the slaves of irregular passions. *Give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind* —(Ecclus. xxiii. 6). Do not, O Lord, deliver me up to a mind blinded by passion. He who is blind sees not what he is doing, and therefore he is in danger of falling

into every crime. Thus so many are lost by submitting to the tyranny of their passions. Some are slaves to the passion of avarice. A person who is now in the other world said : Alas ! I perceive that a desire of riches is beginning to tyrannize over me. So said the unhappy man; but he applied no remedy. He did not resist the passion in the beginning, but nurtured it till death, and thus at his last moments left but little reason to hope for his salvation. Others are slaves to sensual pleasures. They are not content with lawful gratifications, and therefore they pass to the indulgence of those that are forbidden. Others are subject to anger; and because they are not careful to check the fire at its commencement, when it is small, it increases and grows into a spirit of revenge.

Disorderly affections, if they are not beaten down in the beginning, become our greatest tyrants. Many, says St. Ambrose, after having victoriously resisted the persecutions of the enemies of the Faith, were afterwards lost because they did not resist the first assaults of some earthly passion. Of this, Origen was a miserable example. He fought for, and was prepared to give his life in defence of the Faith; but afterwards, yielding to human respect, he was led to deny the Faith, as we are told by Natalis Alexander. We have still a more miserable example in Solomon, who, after having received so many gifts from God, and after being inspired by the Holy Ghost, was, by indulging a passion for certain pagan women, induced to offer incense to idols. The unhappy man who submits to the slavery of his wicked passions resembles the miserable ox that is sent to the slaughter after a life of constant labour. During their whole lives worldlings groan under the weight of their sins, and, at the end of their days they fall into hell.

When the winds are strong and violent the pilot lowers the sails and casts anchor. So when we find ourselves assailed by any bad passion, we should lower the sails; that is, we should avoid all the occasions which may increase the passion, and should cast anchor

by uniting ourselves to God, and by begging of Him to give us strength not to offend Him.

But some of you will say : What am I to do? I live in the midst of the world where my passions continually assail me even against my will. I will answer in the words of Origen : " The man who lives in the darkness of the world and in the midst of secular business, can with difficulty serve God." Whoever, then, wishes to insure his eternal salvation, let him retire from the world and take refuge in one of those exact Religious Communities which are the secure harbours in the sea of this world. If he cannot actually leave the world, let him leave it at least in affection by detaching his heart from the things of this world, and from his own evil inclinations : *Go not after thy lusts,* says the Holy Ghost, *but turn away from thy own will*—(Ecclus. xviii. 30). Follow not your own concupiscence; and when your will would impel you to evil, you must not indulge, but must resist its inclinations.

The time is short . . . the fashion of this world passeth away—(1 Cor. vii. 29-31). The time of life is short; we should then prepare for death which is rapidly approaching; and to prepare for that awful moment let us reflect that everything in this world shall soon end.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The soldiers came, and broke the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus, but when they came to Jesus, they saw that He was already dead, and abstained from doing the same to Him. One of them, however, with a spear pierced His side, from

which immediately came forth Blood and water—(Jo. xix. 34).

St. Cyprian says that the spear pierced straight into the Heart of Jesus Christ, and the same was revealed to St. Bridget. From which we understand that, as both Blood and water flowed forth, the spear, in order to strike the heart, must first have pierced the pericardium.

St. Augustine says that St. John used the words *opened the side*, because in the Heart of the Lord the way of life was opened, whence came forth the Sacraments by means of which we enter upon eternal life. Further, it is said that the Blood and water which came from the side of Jesus were figures of the Sacraments; the water, of Baptism, which is the first of the Sacraments; and the Blood, of the Eucharist, which is the greatest.

St. Bernard further says that, by receiving this visible stroke, Jesus Christ wished to signify the invisible stroke of love by which His Heart was pierced for us.

St. Augustine, speaking of the Eucharist, says that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to-day is not less efficacious before God than the Blood and water which flowed that day from the side of Jesus Christ.

II.

Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross —(Colos. ii. 14). The sentence was already recorded against us that was to condemn us to eternal death, as rebels against the offended Majesty of God. And what has Jesus Christ done? With His Blood He has cancelled the writing of the condemnation, and, to deliver us from all fear, He has fastened it to His own Cross, on which He died to satisfy for us to the Divine justice. My soul, behold the obligation thou art under to thy Redeemer; and hear how the Holy Spirit now reminds thee: *Forget not the kindness of thy surety*—(Ecclus. xxix. 19). Forget not the kindness of thy Surety, Who,

taking upon Himself thy debts, has paid them for thee, and behold, the pledge of the payment has been already fixed to the Cross. When, therefore, thou dost remember thy sins, look upon the Cross, and have confidence; look on that sacred wood stained with the Blood of the Lamb of God sacrificed for thy love, and hope in and love a God Who has loved thee so much.

Tuesday—Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE CERTAINTY OF BEING SAVED OR LOST.

God desires all men to be saved, and He gives His graces to all, but many will not use these means of salvation and are lost, for "Heaven is not for the slothful."

I.

With fear and trembling work out your salvation, wrote St. Paul to the Philippians—(Phil. ii. 12). In order to be saved we should tremble lest we be lost, for there is no middle course. We must be either saved or lost forever. He who trembles not is in great danger of being lost, because he takes but little care to employ the means of obtaining salvation. God desires that all should be saved, and He gives to all His grace; but He requires that all should co-operate for this end. All desire to be saved, yet multitudes, because they will not employ the means of salvation, are lost. St. Philip Neri used to say: *Heaven is not made for the slothful.*

Enlighten me, O Lord, that I may know what I ought to do, and what to avoid, for I desire to do all Thou requirest of me. I am determined, by Thy grace, to save my soul.

St. Teresa said to her Religious: *One soul!* my daughters, one *Eternity!* She meant that in this world we ought not to attend to anything but the salvation of our souls; because if the soul be lost, all is lost; and if once lost, it is lost forever! Benedict XII, being asked by a prince for a favour that he could not grant without committing sin, answered the ambassador: "Tell your prince that if I had two souls I would give him one; but as I have only one I cannot consent to lose it for his sake." Thus should we answer the devil or the world when they offer us forbidden fruit.

O God, how often have I lost my soul by forfeiting Thy grace! But since Thou offerest me pardon, I detest all the offences I have committed against Thee, and will love Thee above all things.

II.

Would that we were fully impressed with the meaning of that great maxim of St. Francis Xavier: *There is but one evil, and there is but one good in the world!* The only evil is damnation; the only good, salvation. Poverty, infirmity, ignominies are not evils. No; for these when embraced with resignation will increase our glory in Heaven. On the other hand, health, riches, and honours are not really *goods* for too many Christians, because they become to them greater occasion of losing their souls.

Save me, then, O my God, and do with me what Thou pleasest. Thou knowest and willest what is best for me. I abandon myself to Thy mercy: *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit*—(Ps. xxx. 6). I am sorry for having been hitherto opposed to Thy will, and am ready to die in order to expiate my offences; but now I love Thee, and wish for nothing but what Thou willest. Grant me Thy love, that I may be

faithful to Thee. And Mary, give me thy powerful assistance.

Spiritual Reading

THE EVIL EFFECTS OF A BAD HABIT.

I.—IT BLINDS THE UNDERSTANDING.

Speaking of those who live in the habit of sin, St. Augustine says: "The very habit itself does not allow them to see the evil they do." The habit of sin blinds sinners, so that they no longer see the evil which they do, nor the ruin which they bring upon themselves; hence they live in blindness as if there was neither God, nor Heaven, nor hell, nor eternity. "Sins," adds the Saint, "however enormous, when habitual, appear to be small, or not to be sins at all." How, then, can the soul guard against them when she is no longer sensible of their deformity, or the evil which they bring upon her?

St. Jerome says that habitual sinners "are not even ashamed of their crimes." Bad actions naturally produce a certain shame; but this feeling is destroyed by the habit of sin. St. Peter compares habitual sinners to swine wallowing in mire. *The sow that was washed is returned to her wallowing in the mire* (2 Pet. ii. 22). The very mire of sin blinds them; and, therefore, instead of feeling sorrow and shame at their uncleanness, they revel and exult in it. *A fool worketh mischief as it were for sport*—(Prov. x. 23). *They are glad when they have done evil*—(Prov. ii. 14). Hence the Saints continually seek light from God; for they know that, should He withdraw His light, they may become the greatest of sinners. How, then, do so many Christians, who know by Faith that there is a hell, and a just God Who cannot but chastise the wicked, how, I say, do they continue to live in sin till

death, and thus bring themselves to perdition? *Their own malice blinded them*—(Wis. ii. 21). Sin blinds them, and thus they are lost.

Job says that habitual sinners are full of inquities. *His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth* —(Job xx. 11). Every sin produces darkness in the understanding. Hence the more sins are multiplied by a bad habit, the greater the blindness they cause. The light of the sun cannot enter a vessel filled with clay; and a heart full of vices cannot admit the light of God, which would make visible to the soul the abyss into which she is running. Bereft of light, the habitual sinner goes on from sin to sin, without ever thinking of repentance. *The wicked walk round about*—(Ps. xi. 9). Fallen into the dark pit of evil habits, he thinks only of sinning, he speaks only of sins, and no longer sees the evil of sin. In fine, he becomes like a brute beast, devoid of reason, and seeks and desires only what pleases the senses. *And man, when he was in honour, did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them*—(Ps. xlviii. 13). Hence the words of the Wise Man are fufilled with regard to habitual sinners. *The wicked man when he comes into the depth of sins, contemneth*—(Prov. xviii. 3). This passage St. John Chrysostom applies to habitual sinners, who, shut up in a pit of darkness, despise sermons, calls of God, admonitions, censures, hell, and God, and become like the vulture that waits to be killed by the fowler, rather than abandon the corrupt carcass on which it feeds.

Let us tremble, as David did when he said : *Let not the tempest of water drown me, nor the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me* —(Ps. lxviii. 16). Should a person fall into a pit there is hope of deliverance as long as the mouth of the pit is not closed; but as soon as it is shut, he is lost. When a sinner falls into a bad habit, the mouth of the pit is gradually closed as his sins are multiplied; the moment the mouth of the pit is shut he is abandoned by God. If you have contracted a habit of any sin, endeavour

instantly to go out of that pit before God deprives you entirely of His light, and abandons you; for, as soon as He abandons you by the total withdrawal of His light, all is over and you are lost.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus came into the world, not only to redeem us, but by His own example to teach us all virtues, and especially humility, and holy poverty which is inseparably united with humility. On this account He chose to be born in a cave; to live a poor Man in a workshop for thirty years; and finally to die, poor and naked, upon a Cross, and seeing His garments divided among the soldiers before He breathed His last. While after His death He had to receive His winding-sheet for burial as an alms from others. Let the poor be consoled, on seeing Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven and earth, thus living and dying in poverty in order to enrich us with His merits and gifts, as the Apostle says: *Being rich he became poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich*—(2 Cor. viii. 9). For this cause, the Saints, to become like Jesus in His poverty, have despised all earthly riches and honours, that they might go one day to enjoy with Jesus Christ the riches and honours prepared by God in Heaven for them that love Him; of which blessings the Apostle says that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the mind of man to conceive what God has prepared for them that love Him.—(1 Cor. ii. 9).

II.

Jesus Christ, then, rose with the glory of possessing all power in Heaven and earth, not as God alone, but as man; wherefore all Angels and men are subject to Him. Let us rejoice in thus seeing in glory our Saviour, our Father, and the best Friend we possess. And let us rejoice for ourselves, because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is for us a sure pledge of our own resurrection and of the glory we hope one day to have in Heaven, both in soul and in body. This hope gave courage to the holy Martyrs to suffer with gladness all the evils of this life, and the most cruel torments of tyrants. We must rest assured, however, that none will rejoice with Jesus Christ but they who are willing to suffer with Him; nor will he obtain the crown who does not fight as he ought to fight. *He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned unless he strive lawfully*—(2 Tim. ii. 5). At the same time let us remember what the same Apostle says, that all the sufferings of this life are short and light in comparison with the boundless and eternal joys we shall enjoy in Paradise—(2 Cor. iv. 17). Let us labour the more to continue in the grace of God, and to pray continually for perseverance in His grace and favour; for without prayer, and persevering prayer, we shall not obtain this perseverance; and without perseverance we shall not obtain salvation.

O sweet Jesus, worthy of all love, Thou hast so loved men that, in order to show Thy love, Thou hast not refused to die wounded and dishonoured upon an infamous tree! O my God, how is it that there are so few among men who love Thee with all their heart? My dear Redeemer, of these few I will be one! Miserable that I am, for in my past life I have forgotten Thy love, and given up Thy grace for miserable pleasures. I know the evil I have done; I grieve for it with all my heart; I would die of grief. Now, O my beloved Redeemer, I love Thee more than myself; and I am ready to die a thousand times rather than lose Thy friendship. I thank Thee for the light Thou hast given

me. O my Jesus, my Hope, leave me not in my own hands; help me until my death.

O Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Wednesday—Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE UNCERTAINTY OF GRACE.

Delay not to be converted to the Lord. The measure of grace is not the same for all: for some greater, for others less. But any one grace may be the last we shall receive from God, and by despising that grace, that light, that call, we may lose our souls.

I.

Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee—(Ecclus. v. 8-9). The Lord admonishes us to be speedily converted, if we would be saved, because if we go on putting off our conversion from day to day, the time of vengeance will come, when God will neither call nor wait for us any longer; death will overtake us in sin, and there will be no means of escaping eternal damnation. God admonishes us in this manner, because He loves us and does not wish to see us perish.

I am convinced, O God, that Thou desirest my salvation; I know that Thou desirest to deal with me in Thy mercy; and it is my desire never more to despise Thee.

Alas! to how many the admonitions given by God during life, become the most cruel swords that pierce their souls in hell! In proportion as the mercies which God showed them were greater, so were their crimes more enormous.

Hadst Thou, O Jesus, condemned me to hell, as I deserved, how great would have been my punishment, since Thy graces and favours have been so abundant towards me! No, I will no longer be ungrateful to Thee. Say to me what Thou pleasest and I will obey Thee in all things. I am sorry for having so often offended Thee; henceforward I will not seek to please myself, but to please Thee alone, my God and only Good.

II.

How careful men are in their temporal affairs, and yet how negligent in the affairs of eternity! If a man has to receive a sum of money from another, he uses every expedient to obtain it as quickly as possible, saying: "Who knows what may happen?" And yet, why do so many live months and years in sin? When the soul is at stake they do not think of saying: "Who knows what may happen?" If money be lost, however much it may be, all is not lost; but if the soul be lost, all is lost, and lost forever, without hope of recovery.

My beloved Redeemer, Thou hast given me life that I may become worthy of Thy grace; and yet I have often renounced Thy grace for something worse than nothing. Pardon me, O infinite Goodness, for I am sorry from the bottom of my heart for having done so. O Jesus, Thou hast done too much to oblige me to love Thee, and I desire to love Thee to the utmost of my power. I love Thee, my sovereign Good, I love Thee more than myself. Permit me not, O God, ever to cease to love Thee. O Mary, holy Queen, protect me.

Spiritual Reading

THE EVIL EFFECTS OF A BAD HABIT.

2.—IT HARDENS THE HEART.

The habit of sin not only blinds the mind, but it also hardens the heart of the sinner. *His heart shall be as hard as a stone, and as firm as a smith's anvil*—(Job xli. 15). By the habit of sin the heart becomes like a stone; and, as the anvil is hardened by repeated strokes of the hammer, so, instead of being softened by Divine inspirations or by instructions, the soul of the habitual sinner is rendered more obdurate by sermons on the Judgment of God, on the torments of the damned, or on the Passion of Jesus Christ: *his heart shall be firm as a smith's anvil.* "The heart," says St. Augustine, "is hardened against the dew of grace, so as to produce no fruit." Divine calls, remorses of conscience, the terrors of Divine justice, are showers of Divine grace; but when, instead of drawing fruit from these Divine blessings, the habitual sinner continues to commit sin, he hardens his heart, and thus, according to St. Thomas of Villanova, he gives a sign of certain damnation, for, from the loss of God's light, and the hardness of his heart, the sinner will, according to the terrible threat of the Holy Ghost, remain obstinate till death. *A hard heart shall fare evil at the last*—(Ecclus. iii. 27).

Of what use are Confessions, when, in a short time after them, the sinner returns to the same vices? "He who strikes his breast," says St. Augustine, "and does not amend, makes firm rather than takes away his sins." When you strike your breast in the tribunal of penance, but do not amend and remove the occasions of sin, you then, according to the Saint, do not take away your sins, but you make them more firm and permanent; that is, you render yourself more obstinate in sin. *The wicked walk round about.* Such is the unhappy life

of habitual sinners. They go round about from sin to sin; and if they abstain for a little, they immediately, in the first occasion of temptation, return to their former iniquities. St. Bernard regards as certain the damnation of such sinners.

But some young persons may say: I will hereafter amend, and sincerely give myself to God. But, if a habit of sin takes possession of you, when will you amend? The Holy Ghost declares that a young man who contracts an evil habit will not relinquish it even in his old age. *A young man, according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it*—(Prov. xxii. 6). Habitual sinners have been known to yield, even at the hour of death, to the sins they have been in the habit of committing. Father Recupito relates that a person condemned to death, even while on his way to the place of execution, raised his eyes, saw a young woman, and consented to a bad thought. We read in a work of Father Gisolfo that a certain blasphemer, who had been likewise condemned to death, when thrown off the scaffold, broke out into a blasphemy, and died in that miserable state.

He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth—(Rom. ix. 18). God shows mercy for a certain time, and then He hardens the heart of the sinner. How does God harden the heart of sinners? St. Augustine answers: "God hardens hearts by not having mercy." The Lord does not directly harden the hearts of habitual sinners; but, in punishment of their ingratitude for His benefits, He withdraws from them His graces, and thus their hearts are hardened and become like a stone. "God does not harden the heart by imparting malice, but by withholding mercy." God does not render sinners obdurate by infusing the malice of obstinacy, but by not giving them the efficacious graces by which they would be converted. By the withdrawal of the sun's heat from the earth, water is hardened into ice.

St. Bernard teaches that hardness or obstinacy of heart does not take place suddenly; but by degrees the

soul becomes insensible to the Divine threats and more obstinate by Divine chastisements. In habitual sinners are verified the words of David : *At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, they have slumbered*—(Ps. lxxv. 7). Even earthquakes, thunders, and sudden deaths do not terrify an habitual sinner. Instead of awakening him to a sense of his miserable state, they rather bring on that deadly sleep in which he slumbers and is lost.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

St. Francis de Sales called Mount Calvary "the Mountain of lovers," and says that the love which springs not from the Passion is weak; meaning that the Passion of Jesus Christ is the most powerful incentive to inflame us with love of our Saviour. To be able to comprehend even a part, for to comprehend the whole is impossible, of the great love which God has shown us in the Passion of Jesus Christ, it is sufficient to glance at what is said of it in the Divine Scriptures, of which I shall here set forth some of the principal passages. Nor let any one complain that I thus repeat the texts which I have already repeated several times in my other works when speaking of the Passion. Many writers of mischievous books constantly repeat their immodest jests, in order the more to excite the passions of their thoughtless readers; and shall it not be permitted to me to repeat those holy texts which most inflame souls with Divine love?

Speaking of this love, Jesus Himself said : *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son* —(Jo. iii. 16). The word *so* expresses much. It teaches

us that when God gave His only-begotten Son, He displayed a love for us we can never comprehend. Through sin we were all dead, having lost the life of grace; but the Eternal Father, in order to make known His goodness to the world, and to show us how much He loved us, chose to send on earth His Son, that by His death He might restore us to the life we had lost. *In this appeared the love of God to us, in that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live by him*—(1 Jo. iv. 9). Thus, in order to pardon us, God refused that pardon to His own Son, desiring that He should take upon Himself to satisfy the Divine justice for all our sins: *He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*—(Rom. viii. 32). The words *delivered up* are used because God gave Him into the hands of the executioners that they might load Him with insults and pains, until He expired in agony on a shameful tree. Thus He first loaded Him with all our sins. *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.* And then He chose to see His Son consumed with the most bitter inward and outward pangs and afflictions: *For the wickedness of my people have I stricken him. The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity*—(Is. liii. 6-8).

II.

St. Paul, considering the great love of God for us, says: *But God* (*who is rich in mercy*) *for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ*—(Eph. ii. 4-5). The Apostle calls it *exceeding charity.* Could there be anything, indeed, of excess in God? Yes; by this he gives us to understand that God has done such things for us, that if Faith had not assured us, none could have believed it. And therefore the Church cries out in astonishment: "How wonderful the condescension of Thy mercy towards us! How incomparable the predilection of Thy love! That Thou mightest ransom Thy slave Thou gavest up Thine own Son!" Remark here the words: *the predilection of Thy love;* for the

love of God to us is more than He has shown to any other creatures. God being Love itself, as St. John says, He loves all His creatures : *Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which thou hast made*—(Wis. xi. 25). But the love He bears to man seems to be that which is the dearest to Him and most beloved, for it appears as though, in love, He had preferred man to the Angels, since He has been willing to die for men and not for the fallen angels.

Thursday—Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE DESIRE OF GOD TO SAVE ALL MEN.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love. And so God has from all eternity loved every human soul. It was for us and for our salvation He sent His only Son into the world to die upon the Cross. Alas, how often have I withdrawn myself from God and sold myself for a nothing to Satan, God's enemy and my own !

I.

It is, indeed, amazing that man, a worm of the earth, should dare to offend His Creator and turn his back upon Him, by despising His graces after God has so favoured and loved him as to lay down His life to save him. But it is still more surprising that God, after having been thus despised by man, should seek after him, invite him to repentance and offer him pardon, as though God stood in need of us and not we of God.

O Jesus, Thou seekest me, and I seek after Thee. Thou desirest me, and I desire only Thee.

For Christ, says the Apostle, *we beseech you, be reconciled to God*—(2 Cor. v. 20). "And does God," exclaims St. Chrysostom, "call thus upon sinners? And what does He ask of them? That they be reconciled, and in peace with Him."

My Redeemer, Jesus Christ, how couldst Thou have had so much love for me, who have so often offended Thee? I detest all my offences against Thee; give me still greater grief, still greater love, that I may deplore my sins, not so much on account of the punishments I have deserved by them, as for the injury I have offered to Thee, my God, Who art infinitely good and amiable.

II.

What is man, exclaims holy Job, *that thou shouldst magnify him? Or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?*—(Job vii. 17).

What good, O Lord, hast Thou ever derived from me? And what canst Thou expect from me, that Thou lovest me so much, and comest so near to me? Hast Thou, then, forgotten all the injuries and treasons I have committed against Thee? But since Thou hast so much loved me, I, a miserable worm, must also love Thee, my Creator and my Redeemer. Yes, I do love Thee, my God; I love Thee with my whole heart; I love Thee more than myself, and because I love Thee I will do everything to please Thee. Thou knowest that nothing is so grievous to me as the remembrance of my having so often despised Thy love. I hope for the future to be able to compensate by my love for the frequent displeasure which I have given Thee. Help me for the sake of that Precious Blood Thou hast shed for me. Help me also, O holy Mary, for the love of thy Son Who died for me.

Spiritual Reading

THE EVIL EFFECTS OF A BAD HABIT.

3.—IT DIMINISHES SPIRITUAL STRENGTH.

He hath torn me with wound upon wound; he hath rushed in upon me like a giant—(Job. xvi. 15). On this text St. Gregory reasons thus : A person assailed by an enemy is rendered unable to defend himself by the first wound which he receives; but, should he receive a second and a third, his strength will be so much exhausted, that death will be the consequence. It is so with sin : after the first and second wound which it inflicts on the soul, she will still have some strength, but only through the Divine grace. But, if she continue to indulge in vice, sin, becoming habitual, rushes upon her like a giant and leaves her without any power to resist it. St. Bernard compares the habitual sinner to a person who has fallen under a large rock, which he is unable to remove. A person in such a case will rise only with difficulty. "The man on whom the weight of a bad habit presses, rises with difficulty."

St. Thomas of Villanova teaches that a soul which is deprived of the grace of God cannot long abstain from new sins. In expounding the words of David : *O my God, make them like a wheel, and as a stubble before the wind*—(Ps. lxxxii. 14), St. Gregory says that the man who contracts the habit of sin yields and yields again to every temptation with as much facility as a straw is moved by the slightest blast of wind. Habitual sinners, according to St. John Chrysostom, become so weak in resisting the attacks of the devil, that, dragged to sin by their evil habit, they are sometimes driven to sin against their will. Yes; because, as St. Augustine says, "a bad habit in the course of time brings on a certain necessity of falling into sin."

St. Bernardine of Sienna says that evil habits become

part of one's very nature. Hence, as it is necessary for men to breathe, so it appears it becomes necessary for habitual sinners to commit sins. They are thus made the slaves of sin. I say the *slaves*. In society there are servants, who serve for wages, and there are slaves, who serve by force, and without remuneration. Having sold themselves as slaves to the devil, habitual sinners are reduced to such a degree of slavery that they sometimes sin without pleasure, and sometimes even without being in the occasion of sin. St. Bernardine compares them to the wings of a wind-mill, which continue to turn the mill even when there is no corn to grind; that is, they continue to commit sin, at least by indulging bad thoughts, even when there is no occasion of sin presented to them. The unhappy beings, as St. John Chrysostom says, having lost the Divine aid, no longer do what they wish themselves, but what the devil wishes.

Listen to what happened in a city in Italy. A certain young man, who had contracted a vicious habit, though frequently called by God, and admonished by friends to amend his life, continued to live in sin. One day he saw his sister suddenly struck dead. He was terrified for a short time; but she was scarcely buried when he forgot her death and returned to his abominations. In two months after he was confined to bed by a slow fever. He then sent for a confessor and made his Confession. But after all this, on a certain day, he exclaimed: Alas! how late have I known the rigour of Divine justice! And turning to his physician, he said: Do not torment me any longer with your medicines, for my disease is incurable. I know for certain that it will bring me to the grave. And to his friends, who stood around, he said: As for the life of this body of mine there is no remedy, so for the life of my poor soul there is no hope of salvation. I expect eternal death. God has abandoned me; this I see in the hardness of my heart. Friends and Religious came to encourage him to hope in the mercy of God; but his answer to all their exhortations was: God has abandoned me. The writer

who relates this fact says that, being alone with the young man, he said to him : Have courage; unite yourself to God and receive the Viaticum. Friend, replied the young man, speak to a stone! The Confession I have made has been null for want of sorrow. I do not wish for a confessor, nor for the Sacraments. Do not bring me the Viaticum; for, should you bring it, I will do that which must excite your horror. The friend then went away quite disconsolate; and returning next day to see the young man he learned from his relatives that he expired during the night without the aid of a priest, and that near his room frightful howlings were heard.

Behold the end of habitual sinners! If you have had the misfortune to contract a habit of sin make a General Confession as soon as possible; for your past Confessions can scarcely have been valid. Abandon instantly the slavery of the devil. Attend to the advice of the Holy Ghost. *Give not . . . thy years to the cruel*—(Prov. v. 9). Why will you serve the devil, your enemy, who is so cruel a master—who makes you lead a life of misery here, to bring you to a life of still greater misery in hell for all eternity? *Lazarus, come forth*—(Jo. xi. 43). Go out of the pit of sin! Give yourself immediately to God Who calls you, and is ready to receive you if you turn to Him. Tremble! this may be for you the last call, to which, if you do not correspond, you shall be lost!

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

When considering the love of the Son of God for men, we should ever bear in mind that when He saw, on the one hand all men condemned because of sin, and on

the other Divine Justice requiring a full and perfect satisfaction, He voluntarily offered Himself to make satisfaction for the offences committed by man, who was himself unable to offer such a satisfaction: *He was offered, because it was his own will*—(Is. liii. 7). And this humble Lamb gave Himself to the torturers, suffering them to lacerate His flesh, and to lead Him to death, without lamenting or opening His mouth, as it was foretold: *He shall be brought as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, he shall not open his mouth*—(Is. liii. 7). St. Paul writes that Jesus Christ accepted the death of the Cross to obey His Father. But let us not imagine that the Redeemer was crucified solely to obey His Father, and not with His own full will; He freely offered Himself to this death, and of His own will chose to die for man, moved by the love He bore him, as He Himself declares by St. John: *I lay down my life; no man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself*—(Jo. x. 17-18). And He said that it was the work of the Good Shepherd to give His life for His sheep. And why was this? What obligation was there on the Shepherd to give His life for the sheep? *Christ also hath loved us, and delivered himself for us*—(Eph. v. 2).

This, indeed, our loving Redeemer Himself declared, when He said: *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself*—(Jo. xii. 32), thereby showing the kind of death that He would die upon the Cross, as the Evangelist himself explains it: *Now this he said, signifying what death he should die*—(Jo. xii. 33). On these words St. John Chrysostom remarks that He draws souls as it were from the hands of a tyrant. By His death He draws us from the hands of Lucifer, who, as a tyrant, keeps us enchained as slaves, to torment us after our death forever in hell.

II.

Miserable should we be if Jesus Christ had not died for us. We should all have been imprisoned in hell. For us who have deserved hell, it is a great motive for us to love Jesus Christ, to think, that by His death, He delivered us from this hell by pouring forth His Blood.

Let us, then, in passing, glance at the pains of hell, where at this hour are so many wretched souls. Oh, miserable beings! There they are sunk in a sea of fire, where they endure ceaseless agony, since in this fire they experience all kinds of pains. There they are given into the hands of devils, who, full of fury, are busied only in tormenting these miserable condemned ones. There, still more than by the fire and the other tortures, are they tormented by remorse of conscience in recalling the sins of their life, which were the cause of their damnation. They see the way of escape from this abyss of torments for ever closed, and find themselves for ever excluded from the company of the Saints, and from their country, Heaven, for which they were created. But what most afflicts them, and constitutes their hell, is to see themselves abandoned by God, and condemned nevermore to be able to love Him, and to look upon themselves with hatred and madness.

Now from this hell Jesus Christ has delivered us, redeeming us not with gold or any earthly treasure, but by giving His own life and Blood upon the Cross. The kings of the earth send their subjects to die in war to preserve their own security; Jesus Christ chose Himself to die, in order to give safety to His creatures.

Friday—Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"*IF I AM LOST, I SHALL NOT BE LOST ALONE.*"

What do you say? If you are lost, and are damned you will not be alone! But what consolation will the company of the wicked be to you in hell? O accursed sin, how it can blind men gifted with reason!

I.

What do you say? If you are lost, and are damned, you will not be alone! But what consolation will the company of the wicked be to you in hell? Every condemned soul in hell weeps and laments, saying: Although I am condemned to suffer forever, oh, would that I might suffer alone! The wretched company which you will meet with there will increase your torments by their despairing groans and moanings. What a torment to hear even a dog howling all night long, or a child crying for hours, and not to be able to sleep! And what will it be to hear the yells and howlings of so many wretched souls in despair, who will continually torment one another with their dismal noises, and this, not for one night, nor for many nights only, but for all Eternity!

Again, your companions will but increase the torments of hell by the stench of their burning carcasses. *Out of their carcases* says the Prophet Isaias, *shall a stench arise*—(Is. xxxiv. 3). They are called carcasses, not because they are dead, for they are alive to pain, but because of the stench they will give forth. Your com-

panions will also increase the torments of hell by their numbers; they will be in that pit as grapes in the wine-press of the anger of God: *He treadeth*, said St. John, *the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty*—(Apoc. xix. 15). They will be straitened on every side, so as to be unable to move hand or foot so long as God shall be God.

II.

O accursed sin, how it can blind men who are gifted with reason! Sinners who affect to despise damnation, are yet very careful to preserve their goods, their situations, and their health; they do not say: "If I lose my property, my place, my health, I shall not be the only one who will lose such things." Yet when the soul is at stake, they say, "If I be lost, I shall not be lost alone!" He who loses the good things of this world and saves his soul will find a recompense for all he has lost; but he who loses his soul, what indemnity will he find? *What exchange shall a man give for his soul?*—(Matt. xvi. 26).

O my God, enlighten me and do not forsake me. How often have I sold my soul to the devil, and exchanged Thy grace and favour for a wretched transitory indulgence of sense! I am sorry, O God, for having thus dishonoured Thy infinite majesty. My God, I love Thee! Suffer me not to lose Thee any more. O Mary, Mother of God, deliver me from hell, and from the guilt of sin, by thy holy intercession.

Spiritual Reading

THE MISERY OF RELAPSING INTO SIN.

St. Jerome says that *many begin well but few persevere*. The Holy Ghost declares that he who *perseveres in holiness* to death, and not he who *begins a good life*,

shall be saved. *But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved*—(Matt. xxiv. 13). The crown of Paradise, says St. Bernard, is *promised* to those who *commence*, but it is *given* only to those who *persevere*.

Since, then, you have resolved to give yourselves to God, listen to the admonition of the Holy Ghost: *Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation*—(Ecclus. ii. 1). Do not imagine that you will have no more temptations, but rather prepare yourself for the combat, and guard against a relapse into the sins you have confessed; for, if you lose the grace of God again, you shall find it difficult to recover it.

When you rise from sin by a sincere Confession, Jesus Christ says to you what He said to the paralytic: *Behold, thou art made whole. Sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee*—(John v. 14). By the Confessions you have made your soul is healed, but not yet saved; for, if you return to sin, you will be again condemned to hell, and the injury caused by the relapse will be far greater, says St. Bernard, than that which you sustained from your former sins. If a man recovers from a mortal disease, and afterwards falls back into it, he will have lost so much of his natural strength that his recovery from the relapse will be impossible. This is precisely what will happen to relapsing sinners; returning to the vomit—that is, taking back into the soul the sins vomited forth in Confesson—they shall be so weak that they will become objects of derision to the devil. St. Anselm says that the devil acquires a certain dominion over them, so that he makes them fall, and fall again as he pleases. Hence the miserable beings become like birds with which a child amuses himself. He allows them, from time to time, to fly to a certain height, and then draws them back again when he pleases, by means of a cord that binds them. Such, says the Saint, is the manner in which the devil treats relapsing sinners.

St. Paul tells us that we have to contend not with men like ourselves, made of flesh and blood, but with the princes of hell. *Our wrestling is not against flesh and*

blood, but against principalities and powers—(Ephes. vi. 12). By these words he wishes to admonish us that we have not strength to resist the powers of hell, and that, to resist them, the Divine aid is absolutely necessary : without it, we shall always be defeated ; but, with the assistance of God's grace, we shall, according to the same Apostle, be able to do all things, and shall conquer all enemies. *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me*—(Phil. iv. 13). But this assistance God gives only to those who pray for it. *Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and you shall find*—(Matt. vii. 7). They who neglect to ask do not receive. Let us, then, be careful not to trust in our resolutions : if we place our confidence in them, we shall be lost. When we are tempted to relapse into sin, we must put our whole trust in the assistance of God, Who infallibly hears all who invoke His aid.

He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall—(1 Cor. x. 12). They who are in the state of grace should, according to St. Paul, be careful not to fall into sin, particularly if they have been ever guilty of mortal sin ; for a relapse into sin brings greater evil than ever on the soul. *And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first*—(Luke xi. 26).

We are told in the holy Scriptures that the enemy *will offer victims to his drag, and will sacrifice to his net; because through them . . . his meat is made dainty*—(Habac. i. 16). In explaining this passage St. Jerome says that the devil seeks to catch in his nets all men, in order to sacrifice them to the Divine justice by their damnation. Sinners who are already in the net he endeavours to bind with new chains ; but the friends of God are his *dainty meats*. To make them his slaves, and to rob them of all they have acquired, he prepares stronger snares. " The more fervently," says Denis the Carthusian, " a soul endeavours to serve God, the more fiercely does the adversary rage against it." The closer the union of a Christian with God, and the greater his efforts to serve God, the more the enemy is armed with rage, and the more strenuously he labours to enter into

the soul from which he has been expelled. *When*, says the Redeemer, *the unclean spirit is gone out of a man . . . seeking rest, and not finding, he saith : I will return into my house, whence I came out*—(Luke xi. 24). Should he succeed in re-entering, he will not enter alone, but will bring with him associates to fortify himself in the soul of which he has again got possession. Thus, the second fall of that miserable soul shall be greater than the first. *And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first*—(Luke xi. 26).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Behold Jesus, then, presented by the Scribes and priests to Pilate as a malefactor, that he might judge Him and condemn Him to the death of the Cross; and see how they follow Him, in order to see Him condemned and crucified. Oh, marvellous thing, cries St. Augustine, to see the Judge judged! To see Justice condemned! To see life dying! And by what were these marvels accomplished except by the love which Jesus Christ bore to men? *Christ hath loved us and delivered himself for us.* Oh, that these words of St. Paul were ever before our eyes! Truly then would every affection for earthly things depart from our heart, and we should think only of loving our Redeemer, reflecting that it was love which brought Him to pour forth all His Blood, to make for us a bath of salvation. *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*—(Apoc. i. 5). St. Bernardine of Sienna says that Jesus Christ from the Cross looked at every single sin of every one of us, and offered His Blood

for every one of them. In a word, love brought the Lord of all to appear the vilest and lowest of all things upon earth.

"O power of love!" cries out St. Bernard; "The Supreme God of all is made the lowest of all! Who hath done this? Love, forgetful of its dignity, powerful in its affections! Love triumphs over God!" Love has done this, because, in order to make itself known to the beloved, it has brought the loving One to lay aside His dignity, and to do that alone which is to the advantage and pleasure of the beloved. Therefore, St. Bernard says that God, Who can be conquered by none, allows Himself to be conquered by the love He bore to men.

We must, moreover, bear in mind that whatever Jesus Christ suffered in His Passion, He suffered for each one of us individually. On which account St. Paul says: *I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself for me*—(Gal. ii. 20). And what the Apostle said every one of us may say. Wherefore St. Augustine writes that each man was redeemed at such a price that each seems to be of equal value with God. The Saint also goes on to say: "Thou hast loved me, not as Thyself, but more than Thyself, since, to deliver me from death, Thou hast been willing to die for me."

II.

Since Jesus could have saved us by a single drop of His Blood, why did He pour it all forth in torments, even so as to die of pure agony on the Cross? "Yes," says St. Bernard, "what a drop might have done, He chose to do with a flood, in order to show us the excessive love He bore us." He calls it *excessive*, as Moses and Elias on Mount Thabor called the Passion of the Redeemer an excess—an excess of mercy and love: *They spoke of his excess, which he should accomplish in Jerusalem*—(Luke ix. 31). St. Augustine, speaking of the Passion of our Lord, says that "His mercy

exceeded the debt of our sins." Thus the value of the death of Jesus Christ being infinite, infinitely exceeded the satisfaction due by us for our sins to the Divine justice. Truly had the Apostle cause to say: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*—(Gal. vi. 14). And what St. Paul says we may all say; what greater glory can we have, or hope for in the world, than to see a God dying for love of us?

O Eternal God, I have dishonoured Thee by my sins; but Jesus, by making satisfaction for me by His death, has more than abundantly restored the honour due to Thee; for the love of Jesus, then, have mercy upon me. And Thou, my Redeemer, Who hast died for me, in order to oblige me to love Thee, grant that I may love Thee. For, having despised Thy grace and Thy love, I have deserved to be condemned to be able to love Thee no more. But, O my Jesus, inflict on me any punishment but this. And therefore, I pray Thee, consign me not to hell, for in hell I could not love Thee. Cause me to love Thee, and then chastise me as Thou wilt. Deprive me of everything, but not of Thyself. I accept every infirmity, every ignominy, every pain Thou willest me to suffer; it is enough that I love Thee. Now, I know, by the light Thou hast given me, that Thou art most worthy of love, and hast so much loved me: I trust to live no longer without loving Thee. For the time past I have loved creatures, and have turned my back upon Thee, the infinite Good; but now I say to Thee that I will love Thee alone and nothing else. O my beloved Saviour, if Thou seest that at any future time I should cease to love Thee, I pray Thee to cause me to die, and I shall be content to die before I am separated from Thee.

O holy Virgin Mary and Mother of God, help me with thy prayers; obtain for me that I may never cease to love my Jesus Who died for me and for thee, my Queen, who hast already obtained for me so many mercies.

Saturday—Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Jesus Christ said : *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.* As holy Mary was the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus Christ in the practice of all virtues, she was the first also in Humility, and merited to be exalted above all creatures.

I.

"Humility," says St. Bernard, "is the foundation and guardian of virtues," for without humility no other virtue can exist in the soul. Should the soul possess all virtues, all will depart when humility goes. But, on the other hand, as St. Francis de Sales wrote to St. Jane Frances de Chantal, "God so loves humility that whenever He sees it He is immediately drawn thither." This beautiful and so necessary virtue was unknown in the world; but the Son of God Himself came on earth to teach it by His own example, and willed that in this virtue in particular we should endeavour to imitate Him : *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart*—(Matt. xi. 29). Mary, being the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus Christ in the practice of all virtues, was the first also in that of humility, and by it merited to be exalted above all creatures. It was revealed to St. Matilda that the first virtue in which the Blessed Mother particularly exercised herself from her very childhood was that of humility.

The first effect of humility of heart is a lowly

opinion of ourselves : " Mary had always so humble an opinion of herself, that, as it was revealed to the same St. Matilda, although she saw herself enriched with greater graces than all other creatures, she never preferred herself to any one." Not indeed that Mary considered herself a sinner : for " humility is truth," as St. Teresa remarks : and Mary knew that she had never offended God : nor was it that she did not acknowledge that she had received greater graces from God than all other creatures; for an humble heart always acknowledges the special favours of the Lord, to humble itself the more : but the Divine Mother, by the greater light wherewith she knew the infinite greatness and goodness of God, also knew her own nothingness, and therefore more than all others she humbled herself. " The most Blessed Virgin had always the majesty of God, and her own nothingness, present to her mind," says St. Bernardine. As a beggar, when clothed with a rich garment, which has been bestowed upon her, does not pride herself on it in the presence of the giver, but is rather humbled, being reminded thereby of her own poverty; so also, the more Mary saw herself enriched, the more did she humble herself, remembering that all was God's gift; whence she herself told St. Elizabeth of Hungary that " she might rest assured that she looked upon herself as most vile and unworthy of God's grace." Therefore St. Bernardine says that " after the Son of God, no creature in the world was so exalted as Mary, because no creature in the world ever humbled herself so much as she did."

II.

It is an act of Humility to conceal heavenly gifts. Mary wished to conceal from St. Joseph the great favour whereby she had become the Mother of God, although it seemed necessary to make it known to him, if only to remove from the mind of her poor spouse any suspicions as to her virtue, which he might have entertained on seeing her pregnant : or, at least,

the perplexity into which it indeed threw him : for St. Joseph, on the one hand unwilling to doubt Mary's chastity, and on the other ignorant of the mystery, *was minded to put her away privately*—(Matt. i. 19). This he would have done had not the Angel revealed to him that his spouse was pregnant by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Again, a soul that is truly humble refuses her own praise; and should praises be bestowed on her, she refers them all to God. Behold, Mary is disturbed at hearing herself praised by St. Gabriel; and when St. Elizabeth said : *Blessed art thou amongst women . . . and whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? . . . Blessed art thou that hast believed*—(Luke i. 42-45), Mary referred all to God, and answered in that humble Canticle : *My soul doth magnify the Lord*—(Luke i. 46-55), as if she had said : Thou dost praise me, Elizabeth; but I praise the Lord, to Whom alone honour is due; thou wonderest that I should come to thee, and I wonder at the Divine goodness in which alone my spirit exults : *and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.* Thou praisest me because I have believed; I praise my God because He hath been pleased to exalt my nothingness : *because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid.* Hence Mary said to St. Bridget : " I humbled myself so much, and thereby merited so great a grace, because I thought, and knew, that of myself I possessed nothing. For this same reason I did not desire to be praised; I only desired that praises should be given to the Creator and Giver of all." Wherefore an ancient author, speaking of the humility of Mary, says : " O truly blessed humility, which hath given God to men, opened Heaven, and delivered souls from hell."

It is also a part of humility to serve others. Mary did not refuse to go and serve Elizabeth for three months. Hence St. Bernard says, " Elizabeth wondered that Mary should have come to visit her; but that which is still more admirable is that she came not to be ministered to but to minister."

Spiritual Reading

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Those who are humble are retiring, and choose the last place; and therefore it was, as remarks St. Bernard, that Mary, when her Son was preaching in a house, as is related by St. Matthew, and she wished to speak to Him, would not of her own accord enter, but remained outside, and did not avail herself of her maternal authority to interrupt Him. For the same reason also when she was with the Apostles awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost, she took the lowest place, as St. Luke relates, *All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus*—(Acts i. 14). Not that St. Luke was ignorant of the Divine Mother's merits, on account of which he should have named her in the first place, but because she had taken the last place amongst the Apostles and women; and therefore he described them all, as an author remarks, in the order in which they were. Hence St. Bernard says: "Justly has the last become the first, who being the first of all became the last."

In fine, those who are humble, love to be contemned; therefore, we do not read that Mary showed herself in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, when her Son was received by the people with so much honour: but on the other hand, at the death of her Son she did not shrink from appearing on Calvary, through fear of the dishonour which would accrue to her when it was known that she was the Mother of Him Who was condemned to die an infamous death as a criminal. Therefore she said to St. Bridget: "What is more humbling than to be called a fool, to be in want of all things, and to believe one's self the most unworthy of all? Such, O daughter, was my humility; this was my joy; this was all my desire with which I thought how to please my Son alone."

The Venerable Sister Paula of Foligno was given to

understand in an ecstasy how great was the humility of our Blessed Lady; and giving an account of it to her confessor, she was so filled with astonishment at its greatness that she could only exclaim: "Oh, the humility of the Blessed Virgin! O Father, the humility of the Blessed Virgin! How great was the humility of the Blessed Virgin! In the world there is no such thing as humility, not even in its lowest degree, when you see the humility of Mary." On another occasion our Lord showed St. Bridget two ladies. The one was all pomp and vanity. "She," He said, "is pride; but the other one whom thou seest with her head bent down, courteous towards all, having God alone in her mind, and considering herself as no one, is Humility, and her name is Mary." Hereby God was pleased to make known to us that the humility of His Blessed Mother was such that she was humility itself.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

St. Augustine says that Jesus Christ, having first given His life for us, has bound us to give our life for Him; and, further, that when we go to the Eucharistic table to communicate, as we go to feed there upon the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, we ought also, in gratitude, to prepare for Him the offering of our blood and of our life, if there is need for us to give them for His glory.

Full of tenderness are the words of St. Francis de Sales on this text of St. Paul: *The charity of Christ presseth us*—(2 Cor. v. 14). To what does it press us? To love Him. But let us hear what St. Francis de Sales

says : " When we know that Jesus has loved us even to death, and that the death of the Cross, is not this to feel our hearts constrained by a violence as great as it is full of delight?" And then he adds : " My Jesus gives Himself wholly to me, and I give myself wholly to Him; I will live and die upon His breast, and neither death nor life shall ever separate me from Him."

St. Peter, in order that we might remember to be ever grateful to our Saviour reminds us that we were not redeemed from the slavery of hell with gold or silver, but with the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, which He, the innocent Lamb, sacrificed for us upon the altar of the Cross. Great, therefore will be the punishment of those who are thankless for such a blessing. It is true that Jesus came to save all men who were lost; but what was said by the Venerable Simeon, when Mary presented the Child Jesus in the Temple is also true : *Behold, this child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted* —(Luke ii. 34). By the words *for the resurrection* he expresses the salvation which all believers should receive from Jesus Christ, who by Faith should rise from death to the life of grace. But first, by the words *he is set for the fall*, he foretells that many shall fall into a greater ruin by their ingratitude to the Son of God, Who came into the world to become a contradiction to His enemies, as the following words imply : *This child is for a sign which shall be contradicted*; Jesus Christ was set up as a sign, against which were hurled all the calumnies, the injuries, and the insults the Jews devised against Him. And this sign is contradicted not only by the Jews of the present day, who deny Him to be the Messias, but by those Christians who ungratefully return His love with offences, and neglect His commands.

II.

Our Redeemer, says St. Paul, went so far as to give His life for us, in order to make Himself the Lord of all our hearts, by the manifestation of His love in dying for

us. *For to this end Christ died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living* —(Rom. xiv. 9). No, we are no longer our own, writes the Apostle, since we have been redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ. *Therefore, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's*—(Rom. xiv. 8). If, then, we do not love Him and obey His precepts, of which the first is that we love Him, we are not only ungrateful, but unjust, and deserve a double punishment. The obligation of a slave rescued by Jesus Christ from the hands of the devil is to devote himself wholly to love and serve Him, whether he live or whether he die.

St. John Chrysostom makes an excellent reflection upon the above-quoted text of St. Paul, saying that God has more care for us than we have for ourselves; and therefore regards our life as His own gain, and our death as His own loss; so that if we die, we die not to ourselves, but also to God. Oh, how great is our glory while we live in this valley of tears, in the midst of so many dangers of perishing, that we should be able to say: *We are the Lord's!* We are His possession; He will take care to preserve us in His grace in this life, and keep us with Himself throughout eternity in the life that is to come!

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"*BEHOLD, A DEAD MAN WAS CARRIED OUT.*" —(Gosp. Luke vii.).

Oh, would to God that men kept Death always before their eyes! If they did they certainly would not lead such sinful lives. Poor sinners! they put away the thought of Death whenever it presents itself, and think only of living for pleasure and amusement, as if they were never to die. But one day the end will come for all.

I.

During their lives the constant thought of the Saints was to please God and sanctify themselves. Hence when death approaches, they go with confidence to meet it, for death will deliver them from the miseries and dangers of the present life, and unite them perfectly with God. But the man who has thought only of his pleasures and his own ease, and has neglected to recommend himself to God, or to reflect on the account which he must one day render, cannot meet death with confidence. Poor sinners! they banish the thought of death whenever it presents itself to them, and think only of living for pleasure and amusement, as if they never were to die. But for each of them the end must one day come. *The end is come; the end is come*—(Ezech. vii. 2). And when this end comes every one must gather the fruit he has sown during his life. *For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap*—(Gal. vi. 8). If he has sown deeds of holiness, he shall receive rewards

of eternal life; but if he has sown evil deeds he shall reap chastisements and eternal death.

The scenes of his past life are the first things that will rush on the mind of the dying man, when the news of death is announced to him. He will then see things in a light far different from that in which he viewed them during life. The acts of revenge which appeared to him lawful, the scandals he thought so little of, speaking obscenely, injuring the character of his neighbour, the pleasures which were regarded as innocent, the acts of injustice he held to be allowable—all these things will then appear what they really were—grievous sins and offences against God, each of which merited hell. Alas! those blind sinners who voluntarily blind themselves during life by shutting their eyes to the light shall, at death, involuntarily see all the evil they have done. *Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened*—(Is. xxxv. 5).

II.

By the light of the candle which lights him to death *the wicked shall see and shall be angry*—(Ps. cxi. 10).

He shall see all the irregularities of his past life—his frequent abuse of the Sacraments; Confessions made without sorrow or purpose of amendment; contracts entered into and completed with an uneasy conscience; injury done to the property and reputation of others; immodest jests, rancours, and vindictive thoughts.

He shall then see the bad example he gave to the young who feared God, and whom he treated with contempt and turned into derision by calling them pious hypocrites and other reproachful names.

He shall see so many lights and calls received from God, so many admonitions of confessors, and so many resolutions and promises made but afterwards neglected.

He shall see particularly the bad maxims by which he regulated his conduct during life. "It is necessary to seek the esteem of the world, and to preserve one's honour." But is it necessary for a man to preserve his

honour by trampling on the honour due to God? "We must have our amusements as often as we can." As if he could indulge in amusements that insult God! "Of what use to the world is a man who has no money?" "If we do not make money we cannot appear among our equals." Such are the maxims of the worldling during life; but at death he will change his language. He will then see the truth of that maxim of Christ: *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*—(Matt. xvi. 26). Unhappy me, the worldling will exclaim on the bed of death, I have had so much time to settle my conscience, and behold I am now at the point of death, and I find my soul burdened with many sins! How little it would have cost me to have broken off such a friendship; to have gone to Confession every week; to have avoided certain occasions of sin! Ah! very little, but even should it have cost me a great deal of pain and labour, I should have submitted to every inconvenience in order to save my soul. Salvation is of greater importance to me than the dominion of the entire world. But, alas! the sentiments of negligent Christians at death are as fruitless as the sorrows of the damned, who mourn in hell over their sins as the cause of their perdition, but mourn in vain.

At death they will derive no consolation from their past amusements or pomps, from their exalted dignities, or from the humiliation of their rivals. On the contrary these things, like so many swords, shall pierce their hearts. *Evil shall catch the unjust man unto destruction*—(Ps. cxxxix. 12). At present the lovers of the world seek after banquets, dances, gambling, and scenes of laughter and joy; but, at death this laughter and joy, as St. James says, shall be turned into mourning and affliction. *Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into sorrow*—(James iv. 9). Of this we see frequent examples. A young man who entertains his companions by sallies of wit, and by immodest jests, is seized with a severe illness. His friends come to see him, and find him overwhelmed

with grief and melancholy. He indulges no more in jests, or laughter, or conversation. If he speaks at all, his words are words of terror or despair. His friends ask why he speaks so despondently—why he is so melancholy. Have courage, they say, your illness is not dangerous. They endeavour to inspire hope and cheerfulness, but he is silent. And how can he be cheerful when he feels his conscience is burdened with so many sins, and sees he must soon appear before Jesus Christ to give an account of his entire life, and that he has much reason to fear he shall receive the sentence of eternal death? He will then say: O fool that I have been! Oh, that I had loved God! Had I loved Him, I should not now find myself in these straits, in this anguish! Oh, that I had time to settle the troubles of my conscience!

Spiritual Reading

THE MISERY OF RELAPSING INTO SIN.

Let us tremble at the thought of relapsing into sin, and let us take care not to avail ourselves of the mercy of God to continue to offend Him. "He," says St. Augustine, "Who has promised pardon to those who repent, has promised repentance to no one." God has indeed promised pardon to all who repent of their sins, but He has not promised to any one the grace to repent of the faults he has committed. Sorrow for sin is a pure gift of God; if He withholds it, how will you repent? And without repentance, how can you obtain pardon? Ah! the Lord will not allow Himself to be mocked. *Be not deceived*, says St. Paul, *God is not mocked* —(Gal. vi. 7). St. Isidore tells us that the man who repeats the sin which he before detested is not a penitent, but a scoffer of God's majesty. And Tertullian teaches that where there is no amendment repentance is not sincere.

Repent, therefore, said Saint Peter, in a discourse to the Jews, *and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*—(Acts. iii. 19). Many repent, but are not converted. They feel a certain sorrow for the irregularities of their lives, but do not sincerely return to God. They go to Confession, strike their breast, and promise to amend; but they do not make a firm resolution to change their lives. They who resolve firmly on a change of life, persevere, or at least preserve themselves for a considerable time in the grace of God. But they who relapse into sin soon after Confession show, indeed, that they repent but that they are not converted; and such persons shall in the end die an unhappy death. "Oftentimes," says St. Gregory, "that happens to the wicked in their compunction, which happens to the just in their temptations to sin." As the just have frequent temptations to sin, but yield not to them, because their will abhors sin, so sinners feel certain impulses to virtue; but these are not sufficient to produce a true conversion. The Wise Man tells us that mercy shall be shown to him who confesses his sins and abandons them, but he does not say mercy is for those who merely confess them. *He that shall confess* (his sins) *and forsake them, shall obtain mercy*—(Prov. xxviii. 13). He, then, who does not give up, but returns to sin after Confession, shall not obtain mercy from God, but shall die a victim of Divine justice. He may expect to die the death of a certain young man, who, as is related in the history of England, was in the habit of relapsing into sins against purity. He always fell back into the same sins after Confession. At the hour of death he confessed his sins, and died in a manner which gave reason to hope for his salvation. But, while a holy priest was celebrating or preparing to celebrate Mass for his departed soul, the miserable young man appeared to him and said that he was damned. He added that, at the point of death, being tempted to indulge a bad thought, he felt himself as if were forced to consent, and, as he was accustomed to do, he yielded to the temptation, and thus was lost.

Is there, then, no means of salvation for relapsing sinners? I do not say this; but I adopt the maxim of physicians: "In malignant diseases powerful remedies are necessary." To return to the way of salvation, the relapsing sinner must do great violence to himself. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away*—(Matt. xi. 12). In the beginning of a new life the relapsing sinner must do violence to himself in order to root out the bad habits he has contracted, and to acquire habits of virtue; for when he has acquired habits of virtue, the observance of the Divine commands will become easy and even sweet. The Lord once said to St. Bridget, that, for those who bear with fortitude the first punctures of the thorns which they experience in the attacks of the senses, in avoiding occasions of sin, and in withdrawing from dangerous conversations, these thorns are by degrees changed into roses.

But to use the necessary violence, and to lead a life of regularity, you must adopt the proper means; otherwise you will do nothing. These are the means:

1. After rising in the morning you must make acts of thanksgiving, of the love of God, and an offering of the actions of the day. You must also renew your resolution never to offend God, and beg of Jesus Christ and His holy Mother to preserve you from sin during the day. Afterwards make your Meditation and hear Mass.

2. During the day make a Spiritual Reading and a Visit to the Most Holy Sacrament.

3. In the evening say the Rosary and make an examination of conscience.

4. Receive Holy Communion at least once a week, or more frequently if your directors advise you. Be careful to choose a Confessor to whom you will regularly go to Confession.

5. It is also very useful to make a Spiritual Retreat every year in some Religious house.

6. Honour the Mother of God every day by some particular devotion, and by fasting every Saturday.

She is the Mother of perseverance, and promises to obtain it for all who serve her. *They that work by me shall not sin*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 30). Above all, it is necessary to ask of God every morning the gift of perseverance, and to beg of the Blessed Virgin to obtain it for you, and particularly in the time of temptation, by invoking the Names of Jesus and Mary as long as the temptation lasts. Happy the man who will continue to act in this manner, and shall be found so doing when Jesus Christ shall come to judge him. *Blessed is that servant, whom, when his lord shall come, he shall find so doing*—(Matt. xxiv. 46).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Jesus Christ, then, died for each one of us, in order that each one of us might live only to his Redeemer, Who died for love of us. *Christ died for all, that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again*—(2 Cor. v. 15). He that lives for himself directs all his desires, fears, and pains, and places all his happiness in himself. But he that lives to Jesus Christ places all his desires in loving and pleasing Jesus Christ; all his joys in gratifying Him; all his fears lest he should displease Him. He is only afflicted when he sees Jesus despised, and he rejoices only in seeing Him loved by others. This it is to live to Jesus Christ, and this He justly claims from us all. To win this from us He has offered all the pains He suffered for love of us.

Does He ask too much in this? No, says St. Gregory, He cannot ask too much when He has given such tokens of His love that He seems to have become a fool for

our sake. Without reserve He has given Himself wholly for us; He has, therefore, a right to require that we should give ourselves wholly to Him, and fix all our love upon Him; and if we take from Him any portion of it, by loving anything either apart from Him or not for His sake, He has reason to complain of us; for then we do not love Him as we should.

II.

If we love not Jesus Christ, we must love creatures. And, in comparison with Jesus Christ, what are creatures but worms of the earth, dust, smoke, and vanity? To St. Clement, Pope, was offered a heap of silver, gold, and gems, if he would renounce Jesus Christ; the Saint, however, gave only a sigh, and then exclaimed: "O my Jesus, Thou infinite Good! how dost Thou endure to be esteemed by men as less than the rubbish of this earth?" "No," says St. Bernard, "it was not rashness which made the Martyrs encounter hot irons, nails, and the most cruel deaths; it was love for Jesus Christ, when they saw Him dead upon the Cross." Behold the example of St. Mark and St. Marcellian who, when they were fastened with nails through their hands and feet, and were rebuked by the tyrants as fools for suffering so cruel a torment rather than renounce Jesus Christ, replied that they had never known greater delights than they then experienced when transfixed with these nails. And all Saints, in order to give pleasure to Jesus Christ Who was thus tormented and despised for our sake, gladly embrace poverty, persecutions, contempt, infirmities, pains and death. Souls betrothed to Jesus Christ upon the Cross know nothing more glorious to them than to bear the signs of the Crucified, which are His sufferings.

Monday—Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"*OH, THAT I HAD TIME TO REPAIR THE PAST!*"

One of the greatest causes of distress and anguish to the careless Christian at the hour of death is the remembrance of the bad use he made of the time he should have employed to acquire merits for Heaven, but which he used, alas, only to heap up punishment for himself in hell. Oh, that I had time to repair the past! *Time shall be no longer*!

I.

Oh, that I had time to repair the past! Thus will the careless Christian speak. But when? When the oil in the lamp is consumed: when he is on the point of entering into eternity. One of the greatest causes of the distress and anguish of the careless Christian at the hour of death is the remembrance of the bad use he has made of the time he ought to have used to acquire merits for Heaven, but which he has used to damn his soul. *Oh, that I had time!* Do you seek for time? You have lost so many nights in gambling, and so many years in indulging the senses, without ever thinking of your soul, and now you seek for time! But now *time shall be no longer*—(Apoc. x. 6). Were you not already admonished by preachers to be prepared for death? Were you not told that it would come upon you when you least expected it? *Be you ready*, says Jesus Christ,

for at what hour you think not the Son of man will come—(Luke xii. 40). You have despised My admonitions, and voluntarily squandered the time My goodness bestowed upon you in spite of your demerits; but now time is at an end! Listen to the words in which the priest that assists you will tell you to depart from this world: Go forth, Christian soul, from this world. And where will you go? To eternity! To eternity! Death respects neither subjects nor monarchs; when it comes, it does not wait even for a moment. *Thou hast appointed his bounds, which cannot be passed*—(Job xiv. 5).

Oh, what terror will the dying man feel at hearing the assisting priest tell him to depart from this world! What dismay will he experience in saying to himself: "This morning I am living, and this evening I shall be dead! To-day I am in this house; to-morrow I shall be in the grave; and where will my soul be found?" His terror will be increased when he sees the death-candle lighted, and when he hears the confessor order the relatives to withdraw from his chamber, and to return to it no more. It shall be still more increased when the confessor gives him the Crucifix, and tells him to embrace it, saying: "Take Jesus Christ to your heart, and think no more of this world." He takes the Crucifix, and kisses it; but, in kissing it, he trembles at the remembrance of the many injuries he has offered to Jesus Christ. He would now wish to repent sincerely of all his injuries to his Saviour, but he sees that his repentance is forced by the necessity of his approaching death. "He," says St. Augustine "who is abandoned by sin before he abandons it, gives it up not freely, but through necessity."

II.

The common delusion of worldlings is that earthly things are great, and that the things of Heaven, as being distant and uncertain, appear to be of little value. They regard tribulations as insupportable, and grievous sins as unimportant. The miserable beings are as if

they were shut up in a room filled with smoke, which hinders them from seeing the objects before their eyes. But at the hour of death this darkness will vanish, and the soul will begin to see things in their real colours. At that hour all temporal things appear to be what they really are—vanity, lies, deception; and the things of eternity will assume their true value. Oh! how important will Judgment, Hell, and Eternity, so much disregarded during life, appear at the time of death! According as they will begin to appear in their true colours, the fears of the dying man will increase. "The nearer the sentence of the Judge approaches, the more sensible the fear of condemnation becomes," says St. Gregory. Hence the sick man will say: "Oh, in what anguish do I die! Unhappy me! Oh, that I knew that so unhappy a death awaited me!" You did not know it, but you should have foreseen it; for you knew that a good death should not be expected after a wicked life.

Spiritual Reading

THE PREDOMINANT PASSION.

Our passions are not of themselves bad or hurtful. When regulated according to the dictates of reason and prudence, they do us no injury, but are, on the contrary, profitable to the soul; but, when disorderly, they are productive of irreparable mischief to those who obey them; for, when any passion takes possession of the heart, it obscures the truth, and makes the soul incapable of distinguishing between good and evil. Ecclesiasticus implored the Lord to deliver him from a mind under the sway of passion. *Give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind*—(Ecclus. xxiii. 6). Let us, then, be careful not to allow any bad passion to rule over us.

Only this have I found, said Solomon, *that God made*

man right, and he hath entangled himself with an infinity of questions—(Eccles. vii. 30). *God made man right*—that is, in the state of justice; but, by giving ear to the serpent, man exposed himself to temptation, and was conquered. He rebelled against God, and his passions rebelled against himself. These are the passions which, according to St. Paul, cause a continual war between the flesh and the spirit. *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh*—(Gal. v. 17). However, with the aid of Divine grace, it is in man's power to resist these passions, and not allow them to rule over him. It is, as the Lord told Cain, even in the power of man to rule over them, and to bring them into subjection to reason. *But the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it*—(Gen, iv. 7). Let the assaults of the flesh and of the devil, to make us abandon the way of God, be ever so violent, Jesus Christ has said: *Lo! the kingdom of God is within you*—(Luke xvii. 21). Within us God has established a kingdom, in which the will is the queen that ought to rule over all the senses and passions. And what greater honour or glory can a man have than to be the master of his passions?

The proper regulation of the motions of the mind constitutes the interior mortification so much recommended by spiritual masters, and secures the salvation of the soul. The health of the body depends on the regulation of the humours—if one of them predominate to excess, it causes death. But the health of the soul consists in the proper control of the passions by reason. But, when any passion rules over reason, it first enslaves, and then kills the soul.

Many pay great attention to their external conduct; they endeavour to appear modest and respectful; but, at the same time, they cherish in their hearts sinful affections against justice, charity, humility, or chastity. For them is prepared the chastisement with which the Saviour threatened the Scribes and Pharisees, who were careful to have their cups and dishes clean, but nourished within unjust and unclean thoughts. *Woe to*

you, Scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish; but, within you are full of rapine and uncleanness—(Matt. xxiii. 25). The Royal Prophet says that all the beauty of a soul that is the true daughter of God consists in an interior good will. *All the glory of the king's daughter is within*—(Ps. xliv. 14). Of what use is it, says St. Jerome, to abstain from food, and at the same time to allow the mind to swell with pride? or to abstain from wine, and to be intoxicated with anger? Christians who act in this manner do not lay aside their vices; they only cover them with the mantle of devotion. A man, then, must divest himself of all bad passions; otherwise he will not be the king over but the slave of his passions, and in opposition to the command of the Apostle sin shall reign in his heart. *Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof*—(Rom. vi. 12). Man, then, is, as St. Thomas says, the king of himself when he regulates his body and his carnal affections according to reason. But, according to St. Jerome, "when the soul serves vice she loses the honour of a throne." She loses the honour of a queen, and becomes, as our Lord says, the slave of sin. *Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*—(Jo. viii. 34).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

St. Augustine says to us: It is not permitted to you to love a little: let Him Who was wholly fixed upon the Cross for you be wholly fixed in your hearts." Let us, therefore, unite ourselves wholly with St. Paul, and say with him: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me*

. . . *I live in the faith of the Son of God who loved me and delivered himself for me*—(Gal. ii. 20). On this St. Bernard remarks : " It is as if he had said,— To all other things I am dead and for them I have no feeling or regard ; but the things which are of Christ, these find me a living man, and prepared to act. Therefore St. Paul says : *To me to live is Christ*—(Phil. i. 21), meaning by these brief words, " Jesus Christ is my life, for He is all my mind, all my hope, all my desire, because He is all my love." It is a sure promise ; if we are dead with Him we shall also live with Him ; if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him ; if we deny Him, He will also deny us." The kings of the earth, after a victory over their enemies, confer a part of all they have gained upon those who have fought on their side. This Jesus Christ does on the Day of Judgment ; He gives a share of the blessings of Heaven to all who have toiled and suffered for His glory. O my Jesus, infinitely lovely, grant that I may no longer live ungrateful to so great a good ! For the past I have lived in forgetfulness of Thy love, and of all Thou hast suffered for me ; but henceforth I will think of nothing but loving Thee. O Wounds of Jesus, Wounds of love ! O Blood of Jesus, inebriating with love ! O death of Jesus, cause me to die to every love which is not love for Him. O Jesus, I love Thee above everything. I love Thee with all my soul ; I love Thee more than myself. I love Thee, and because I love Thee, I wish to die of grief because I have so often turned my back upon Thee, and have despised Thy grace. By Thy merits, O my crucified Saviour, give me Thy love, and make me all Thine own.

O Mary, my hope, make me love Jesus Christ, and I ask for nothing more.

II.

The Apostle says : *If we be dead with him, we shall live also with him*—(2 Tim. ii. 11). To die with Christ means the denial of ourselves, that is, of our own inclinations, which, if we deny not, we shall come to deny

Jesus Christ, Who will justly deny us on the day of account. And here we must remark that we not only deny Jesus Christ when we deny the Faith, but also when we refuse to obey Him in anything He desires of us; as, for example, when, for love of Him, we will not forgive an injury we have received, when we give way to the love of vain honour, when we will not break through a friendship which imperils the friendship of Jesus Christ, or we yield to the fear of being counted ungrateful, while our first gratitude is due to Jesus Christ, Who has given His Blood and Life for us, which no creature whatever has done.

O Divine Love! how is it that Thou art despised by men? O man, look at this Cross of the Son of God, Who as an innocent Lamb, sacrifices Himself to pay for thy sins, and thus to gain thy love! Look at Him! Look at Him! And love Him!

Tuesday—Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DEATH IS NOT THE FIT TIME FOR REPAIRING THE PAST.

A dying man may appear to have true and sincere sorrow for the wickedness of his past life. But is his sorrow true sorrow? The wailings of many careless Christians on their death-bed do not proceed from sorrow but from fear. As St. Augustine says: *They are not afraid of sin but of burning.*

I.

The time a careless Christian will have when death comes will not be fitted for settling troubles of conscience. First of all the time itself will be very short; for at the commencement, and for some days during the progress of the disease, the sick man thinks only of physicians, of remedies, and of making his last will. During that time his relatives, friends, and even the physicians deceive him by holding out hopes of recovery. Hence, deluded by these hopes, he will not be able for some time to persuade himself that his death is near at hand. When will he begin to persuade himself that death is near? Only when he will be at the very point of death. This is another reason why that time is unfit for repairing the evils of the soul. At that time the dying man is sick in mind as well as in body. He will be assailed by pains in the chest, debility, spasms, and delirium. These will render him unable to make any effort to excite true detestation of his past sins, or to apply to the disorders of his past life a remedy which will calm the terrors of his conscience. The news of his approaching death will astound him to such a degree that he will scarcely be alive at all.

A person labouring under a severe headache, which deprives him of sleep for two or three nights, will not even attempt to dictate a letter. And at death, when he feels but little, understands but little, and sees only a medley of things which fills him with terror, the careless Christian begins to settle a conscience burdened with the sins of thirty or forty years. Then are verified the words of the Gospel : *The night cometh when no man can work* (Jo. ix. 4). Then his conscience will say to him : *Now thou canst be steward no longer*—(Luke xvi. 2). There is no more time for negotiation; what is done, is done! *When distress cometh upon them they will seek for peace, and there shall be none. Trouble shall come upon trouble*—(Ezech. vii. 25, 26).

We often hear it said that some person who led a bad life afterwards died a good death; that by his sighs and

tears he gave proof of his sincere repentance. The wailings of such persons proceed not from sorrow for their sins but from the fear of imminent death, says St. Augustine. He was not afraid of *sinning*, says the holy Doctor, but of *burning*. Till that moment the dying man loved sinful objects: will he then detest them? Perhaps he will then love them with more tenderness; for the objects of our affections become more dear to us when we are afraid of losing them. The celebrated master of St. Bruno died with signs of repentance; but from his coffin he spoke and said he was damned. If at the hour of death, even the Saints lament that on account of the state of the head they can think but little of God, or make but little effort to excite good acts, how can the negligent Christian make these acts at death, when he was not in the habit of making them during life? It may be said that he appeared to have a sincere sorrow for the wickedness of his past life. But, was his sorrow true sorrow? The devil persuades him that the wish to have sorrow is true sorrow; but he deceives him. The dying man will say: "I am sorry from the bottom of my heart," but these words shall come from a heart of stone. *From the midst of the rocks they shall give forth their voices*—(Ps. ciii. 12). But he has been frequently at Confession, and has received all the Sacraments; he has died in perfect resignation. Ah! the criminal who goes to be executed appears to be perfectly resigned: but why? Because he cannot escape from the officers of justice, who bring him in chains to the place of execution.

II.

O moment on which Eternity depends! This moment made the Saints tremble at the hour of death, and made them exclaim: "O God, where shall I be in a few hours?" "Sometimes," says St. Gregory, "the soul even of the just man is disturbed by the terror of vengeance." What, then, shall the careless Christian, who has disregarded God, feel when he sees the scaffold prepared on which he must die? *His eyes shall see his*

own destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty—(Job xxi. 20). He shall see with his own eyes death prepared for his soul, and shall from that moment begin to feel the anger of the Lord. The Viaticum which he must receive, the Extreme Unction which will be administered to him, the Crucifix placed in his hands, the recommendation of the soul which is read by the assisting priest, the lighting of the blessed candle—all these shall form, as it were, the scaffold of Divine justice. The poor sick man perceives that he is already in a cold sweat, that he can no longer move or speak, that his breathing has begun to fail : in a word, he sees that the moment of death is at hand; his soul defiled with sins; the Judge waiting for him; hell opening under his feet; and in this confusion of darkness and terror he shall enter into Eternity.

Oh, that they would be wise, and would understand, and would provide for their last end—(Deut. xxxii. 29). Behold, how the Holy Ghost exhorts us to provide now for the terrible straits and distress by which we shall be encompassed at death, and to adjust at once the accounts we must render to God; for it will be then impossible to settle these accounts so as to save our souls.

My crucified Jesus, I will not wait till death to embrace Thee; I embrace Thee at this moment. I love Thee above all things; and because I love Thee I repent with my whole heart of all the offences and insults I have offered to Thee, Who art infinite goodness; and I purpose and hope, with Thy grace, to love Thee always and never more offend Thee. Through the merits of Thy Passion I ask Thee to assist me.

Spiritual Reading

THE PREDOMINANT PASSION.

St. James exhorts us to treat the body and its lusts as we would treat a horse. We put a bridle in the mouth of a horse, and we bring him wherever we please. *We put bits in the mouths of horses, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body*—(James iii. 3). Hence, as soon as we feel the cravings of any bad passion, we must restrain it with the bridle of reason; for, if we yield to its demands, it will bring us down to the level of brute animals that obey not the dictates of reason but the impulse of their appetites. *And man, when he was in honour, did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them*—(Ps. xlviii. 13). "It is worse," says St. John Chrysostom, "to become like a senseless beast than to be born one, for, to be naturally without reason is tolerable." The Saint says that to want reason by nature is not disgraceful; but, to be born with the gift of reason and afterwards to live like a beast, obeying the lusts of the flesh, is degrading to man, and makes him worse than a senseless brute. What would you say if you saw a man who would of his own accord live in a stable with horses, feed with them on the same food, and sleep on the same bedding? The man who submits to the tyranny of a passion does what is far worse in the eyes of God.

It was thus the Gentiles lived, who, because the darkness of their understanding prevented them from discerning between good and evil, went wherever their sensual appetite led them. *That you walk not*, says St. Paul, *as also the Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened*—(Ephes. iv. 17, 18). Hence they were abandoned to their vices —impurity and avarice, and blindly obeyed the com-

mands of their passions. *Who, despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness, unto covetousness*—(Ephes. iv. 19). To this miserable state are all Christians reduced who, despising reason and God, follow the dictates of passion. In punishment of their sins God abandons them, as He abandoned the Gentiles, to their own wicked desires. *Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their own heart*—(Rom. i. 24). This is the greatest of all chastisements.

St. Augustine writes that two cities may be built up in the heart of a Christian : one by the love of God, the other by self-love. Thus, if the love of God reign within us, we shall despise ourselves : if self-love reign, we shall despise God. But, in conquering self-love consists the victory to which will be given a crown of eternal glory. This was the great maxim St. Francis Xavier always inculcated upon his disciples : "Conquer yourself ! Conquer yourself !" All the thoughts and feelings of a man, says the Scripture, are inclined to evil from his youth. *The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth*—(Gen. viii. 21). Hence we must, during our whole life, zealously combat and conquer the evil inclinations which continually rise within us, as noxious weeds spring up in our gardens. Some will ask how they can free themselves from bad passions, and how prevent them from springing up within them. St. Gregory gives the answer : It is one thing to look at these beasts in the fields and another to lodge them within the heart. It is one thing, says the Saint, to look at these beasts, or bad passions, when they are outside, and another to harbour them in the heart. As long as they are outside they can do us no harm; but if we admit them into the soul they devour us.

All bad passions spring from self-love. This is, as Jesus Christ teaches all who wish to follow Him, the principal enemy we have to contend with; and this enemy we must conquer by self-denial. *If any one shall come after me, let him deny himself*—(Matt. xvi. 24). " Unless we banish self-love from the heart the love of

God cannot enter," says Thomas à Kempis. Blessed Angela of Foligno used to say that she was more afraid of self-love than of the devil, because self-love has greater power than the devil to draw us into sin. St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi used to say the same, as we read in her Life : " Self-love is the greatest traitor we have to guard against. Like Judas, it betrays us with a kiss. He who conquers it conquers all enemies; he who does not conquer it is lost." The Saint then adds : " If you cannot kill it with a single stroke, give it poison." She meant that, since we are not able to destroy this accursed enemy, which, according to St. Francis de Sales, dies only with our latest breath, we must at least labour to weaken it as much as possible; for if it grow strong, it kills us. Death, says St. Basil, is the reward which self-love gives its followers. The wages of self-love is death; it is the beginning of every evil. Self-love seeks not what is just and honourable, but what is agreeable to the senses. Hence Jesus Christ has said : *He that loveth his life*—that is, his sensual appetite or self-will—*shall lose it*—(Jo. xii. 25). He who truly loves himself, and wishes to save his soul, should refuse to the senses whatever God has forbidden; otherwise he shall lose his God and himself.

There are two principal passions which reign within us :—the concupiscible and irascible appetites—that is, love and hatred. I have said *two principal passions;* for each of them, when vicious, draws in its train many other bad passions. The concupiscible appetite brings with it temerity, ambition, greediness, avarice, jealousy, scandal. The irascible brings with it revenge, injustice, slander, envy. St. Augustine advises us, in our combat with the passions, not to endeavour to beat them all down in a single conflict. We must trample on the passion which we have cast to the ground, so that it may be no longer able to contend with us, and then we must endeavour to subdue the other passions which resist our efforts.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Neither is there salvation in any other—(Acts iv. 12) St. Peter says that our whole salvation is in Jesus Christ, Who, by means of the Cross, where He sacrificed His life for us, opened to us a way for hoping for every blessing from God, if we would be faithful to His commands.

Let us hear what St. John Chrysostom says of the Cross. He says : " The Cross is the hope of Christians, the staff of the lame, the comfort of the poor, the destruction of all pride, the victory over devils, the guide of youth, the pilot of mariners, the refuge of those who are in danger, the counsellor of the just, the rest of the afflicted, the physician of the sick, the glory of Martyrs." The Cross, that is, Jesus crucified, is—

The *hope* of the faithful, because if we had not Jesus Christ we should have no hope of salvation.

It is the *staff* of the lame, because we are all lame in our present state of corruption and weakness. We have in truth no strength to walk in the way of salvation except that which is communicated to us by the grace of Jesus Christ.

It is the *comfort* of the poor, and we all are poor, for all we have we have received from Jesus Christ.

It is the *destruction of all pride*, for the followers of the Crucified cannot be proud, seeing Him dead as a malefactor upon the Cross.

It is *victory* over the devils, for the very Sign of the Cross is sufficient to put them to flight.

It is the *instructor* of the young, for admirable is the teaching which they who are beginning to walk in the ways of God learn from the Cross.

It is the *pilot* of mariners, and guides us through the storms of this present life.

It is the *haven* in peril, for they who are in peril of perishing, through temptations of strong passions, find a secure harbour by flying to the Cross.

It is the *counsellor* of the just, for how many Saints learn wisdom from the Cross, that is, from the troubles of this life.

It is the *rest* of the afflicted, for where can they find greater relief than in contemplating the Cross, on which a God suffers for love of them?

It is the *physician* of the sick, for when they embrace it, they are healed of the wounds of the soul.

It is the *glory* of Martyrs, for to be made like Jesus Christ, the King of Martyrs, is the greatest glory they could possess.

II.

In a word, all our hope is placed in the merits of Jesus Christ. The Apostle says: *I know both how to be brought low and I know how to abound . . . both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need*—(Philipp. iv. 12). Thus St. Paul, instructed by the Lord, says: I know how I ought to conduct myself; when God humbles me I resign myself to His will; when He exalts me, to Him I give all the honour; when He gives me abundance, I thank Him; when He makes me endure poverty, still I bless Him; and I do all this not by my own strength, but by the strength of the grace God gives me. For he that trusts in Jesus Christ is strengthened with invincible power.

The Lord, says St. Bernard, makes those who hope in Him all powerful. The Saint also adds that a soul which does not presume upon its own strength, but is strengthened by the Word, can govern itself so that no evil shall have power over it; and no force, no fraud, can cast it down.

The Apostle prayed thrice to God that the impure temptations which troubled him might be driven away, and he was answered: *My grace is sufficient for thee,*

for power is made perfect in infirmity—(2 Cor. xii. 9). How is this that the virtue of perfection consists in weakness? St. Thomas, with St. Chrysostom, explains it, that the greater our weakness and inclination to evil, the greater is the strength given us by God. Therefore St. Paul himself says: *Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me. For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ. For when I am weak then am I powerful*—(2 Cor. xii. 9-10).

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Wednesday—Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

I.—PREPARE AT ONCE.

Would not that general be thought mad who did not begin to lay in stores of provisions and arms till the city was besieged by the enemy? And the captain of the ship insane who neglected to provide anchors and cables till overtaken by the storm? Such, precisely, is the folly of the Christian who waits till the hour of death to settle the affairs of his conscience.

I.

All admit that they must die, and die only once, and that nothing is of greater importance than to die well,

because on death depends whether we shall be forever in bliss or forever in despair. All know that our eternal happiness or our eternal unhappiness depends on leading a good or a bad life. How then does it happen that the greater part of Christians live as if they were never to die, or as if to die well or ill were of little moment! They live in sin because they do not think of death. *In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin*—(Ecclus. vii. 40). We must be persuaded that the hour of death is not fit for settling the accounts of the soul, and securing the great affair of eternal salvation. In worldly matters prudent men take measures in due time to secure temporal gain—to obtain a position of emolument. To preserve or restore bodily health the necessary remedies are not deferred a single moment. What would you say of the man who should put off his preparation for a trial on which his life depended till the day of trial arrived? Would you not stigmatize as a fool the general who should not begin to lay in a supply of provisions and arms till the city is besieged? Would it not be folly in a pilot to neglect till the time of the tempest to provide the vessel with an anchor and a helm? Such precisely is the folly of the Christian who neglects to settle his conscience till death is at hand.

When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest . . . then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear . . . Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way—(Prov. i. 27-31). The time of death is a time of storm and confusion. At that awful hour sinners call on God for assistance; but they invoke His aid through the fear of hell, which they see at hand, and not with true contrition of heart. Hence it is that God is deaf to their cry; and hence also will they then taste the fruit of their wicked life. What they have sown they shall reap. Ah! it will not then be enough to receive the Sacraments; it is necessary at death to hate sin, and to love God above all things. But how can he hate forbidden pleasures who has loved them till that moment? How can he love God above all things who

has till then loved creatures more than he has loved God?

O my Jesus, by the merits of that Blood Thou hast shed for my sake, do not permit me ever more to offend Thee. Give me holy perseverance, give me Thy love. I love Thee, and I will never cease to love Thee till death. My God, have mercy on me for the love of Jesus Christ. O Mary, my hope, do thou too have pity on me; recommend me to God: thy recommendations are never rejected by that God Who loves thee so tenderly.

II.

The Lord called those virgins *foolish* who wished to prepare their lamps when the bridegroom was nigh. All have a horror of a sudden death, because there is no time to settle the accounts of conscience. All confess that the Saints have been truly wise, because they prepared for death during life. And what are we doing? Shall we expose ourselves to the danger of having little time to prepare for death? We ought to do at present what we shall then wish to have done. Oh! what pain will then arise from the remembrance of time lost, and still more from the remembrance of time spent in sin: time given by God to merit eternal life; but now past, and never to return! What anguish will the sinner feel when he shall be told: *Thou canst be steward no longer!*—(Luke xvi. 2). There is no more time for doing penance, for frequenting the Sacraments, for hearing sermons, for visiting Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament, or for prayer. What is done is done. To make a good confession, to remove several grievous scruples, and thus tranquillize the conscience, would require a better state of mind and time more free from confusion and agitation. *But time shall be no more*—(Apoc. x. 6).

Ah, my God, had I died on one of the nights known to Thee, where should I be at present? I thank Thee for having waited for me; I thank Thee for giving me the time I should have spent in hell from the first moment

that I offended Thee. Ah! give me light, and make me sensible of the great evil I have done Thee in voluntarily losing Thy grace, which Thou didst merit for me by the sacrifice of Thy life on the Cross. Ah, my Jesus, pardon me! I am sorry from the bottom of my heart, and above all things, for having despised Thee Who art infinite goodness. Assist me, O my Saviour, that I may never lose Thee again. Alas, my Lord, if I return again to sin, after the many lights and graces Thou hast bestowed upon me, should I not deserve a hell for myself?

Spiritual Reading

THE PREDOMINANT PASSION.

We must endeavour, above all, to find out what is our predominant passion. He who conquers it conquers all his passions; he who allows himself to be overcome by it is lost. God commanded Saul to destroy all the Amalecites, along with all their animals and all their property. He destroyed everything that was vile or cheap, but spared the life of King Agag, and preserved all that was valuable and beautiful. *And Saul and the people spared Agag and the rest of the flocks of sheep . . . and all that was beautiful, and would not destroy them; but everything that was vile and good for nothing, that they destroyed*—(1 Kings xv. 9). In this Saul was afterwards imitated by the Scribes and Pharisees, to whom our Lord said: *Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, because you tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith*—(Matt. xxiii. 23). They were careful to pay the tithe of things of least value, and neglected the more important things of the Law, such as justice, charity to their neighbour, and faith in God. Some persons act in a similar manner; they abstain from certain defects of minor importance,

and, at the same time, allow themselves to be ruled by their predominant passion; but if they do not destroy this passion they never shall gain the victory of salvation. The King of Syria commanded the captains of his cavalry to kill the King of Israel only, and not to mind the others. *Fight ye not with small or great, but with the King of Israel only*—(2 Par. xviii. 30). They obeyed the order, slew King Achab, and gained the victory.

We must imitate the captains of Syria: unless we kill the king—that is, the predominant passion—we shall never be able to obtain salvation. The passion which brings man under its sway first blinds him and prevents him from seeing his danger. Now, how can a blind man, led by a blind guide, such as passion, which follows not reason, but sensuality, possibly avoid falling into some abyss? *If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit*—(Matt. xv. 14). St. Gregory says that it is a common artifice of the devil to inflame daily more and more our predominant passion, and thus he brings us into many horrible excesses. Through passion for a kingdom Herod spilled the blood of so many innocent babes at Bethlehem; through love for a woman Henry the Eighth of England was the cause of so many frightful spiritual evils, put to death several most worthy individuals, and in the end lost the Faith. No wonder: for he who is under the domination of any passion no longer sees what he does. Therefore he disregards corrections, excommunications, and even his own damnation: he seeks only his own pleasures, and says: "Come what will, I will satisfy this passion." And, as eminent virtue is accompanied by other virtues, so an enormous vice brings in its train other vices, says St. Laurence Justinian.

It is necessary, then, as soon as we perceive any passion beginning to reign within us, to beat it down instantly before it acquires strength. "Let not cupidity gain strength," says St. Augustine; "strike it down while it is weak." St. Ephrem gives the same advice: "Unless you quickly destroy passions, they cause an

ulcer." A wound, if it be not closed up, will soon become an incurable ulcer. To illustrate this by an example : a certain monk, as St. Dorotheus relates, commanded one of his disciples to pluck up a small cypress. The disciple obeyed, and drew it up with a slight effort. The monk then ordered him to pull up another tree which was somewhat larger. He succeeded in the task, but not without a good deal of labour. The disciple was then told to pluck up a tree which had taken deep root; but all his efforts were ineffectual. The monk then said to him : Thus it is, my son, with our passions; when they have taken deep root in the heart we shall not be able to extirpate them. Let us keep always before our eyes this maxim : that either the spirit must trample on the flesh or the flesh shall trample on the spirit.

Cassian has laid down an excellent rule for conquering our passions. Let us endeavour, he says, to change the object of our passions; and thus from being vicious they shall become holy. Some are prone to anger against all who treat them with disrespect. Such persons ought to change the object of their passions and turn their indignation into a hatred of sin, which is more injurious to them than all the devils in hell. Others are inclined to love every one who possesses amiable qualities : they should fix all their affections on God, Who is infinitely amiable. But to recommend ourselves to God, and to beg of Him to deliver us from our passions is the best remedy against them. And when any passion becomes very violent, we must multiply prayers. Reasoning and reflections are then of little use; for passion obscures our faculties; and the more we reflect the more delightful the object of passion appears. Hence there is no other remedy than to have recourse to Jesus and to most holy Mary, saying with tears and sighs : *Lord, save us, or we perish! Do not permit us to be ever separated from thee! We fly to thy protection, O holy Mother of God!* O souls created to love God, let us raise ourselves above the earth; let us cease to fix our thought and affections on the miserable things of this world; let us cease to love dross and smoke and mire. Let us

endeavour with all our strength to love the Supreme Infinite Good, our most amiable God, Who has made us for Himself, and expects us in Heaven to make us happy, and to give us the very glory which He Himself enjoys for eternity.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

For the word of the Cross, to them that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is to us, it is the power of God—(1 Cor. i. 18). Thus St. Paul warns us not to follow after worldly men, who place their trust in riches, in their relatives and friends in the world, and account the Saints fools for despising those earthly goods; but to place all our hopes in the love of the Cross—that is, of Jesus crucified, Who gives every blessing to those who trust in Him. We must further remark that the power and strength of the world is altogether different from that of God; it is exercised in worldly riches and honours, but the latter in humility and endurance. Wherefore St. Augustine says that our strength lies in knowing that we are weak, and in humbly confessing what we are. And St. Jerome says that this one thing constitutes the perfection of the present life, that we should know that we are imperfect. For then we distrust our own strength, and abandon ourselves to God Who protects and saves those who trust in Him. *He is the protector of all who trust in him,* says David. *Who savest those who trust in thee*—(Ps. xvii. 31; xvi. 7). *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion*—(Ps. cxxiv. 1). Therefore St. Augustine reminds us that, when we are tempted, we must hasten to abandon ourselves to Jesus Christ.

Who will not suffer us to fall, but will embrace and hold us up, and thus remedy our weakness.

When Jesus Christ took upon Himself the weaknesses of humanity, He merited for us a strength which conquers our weakness: *For in that he himself hath suffered and been tempted, he is powerful to help those who are tempted*—(Heb. ii. 18). How is this that the Saviour in being Himself tempted, was able to strengthen us in our temptations? It is meant that Jesus Christ, by being afflicted by temptations, became more ready to feel for us and help us when we are tempted. To this corresponds that other text of the same Apostle, *We have not a High Priest who cannot feel compassion for our infirmities; but was in all things tempted like us, though without sin. Therefore let us go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in the help we need*—(Heb. iv. 15, 16).

Jesus Himself endured fears, weariness, and sorrows, as the Evangelists bear witness, speaking especially of the afflictions He endured in the garden of Gethsemane the night before He suffered, and thereby merited for us courage to resist the threats of those who would corrupt us, strength to overcome the weariness we experience in prayer, in mortifications, and other devout exercises, and the power of enduring with peace of mind that sadness which afflicts us in adversity.

II.

Jesus, at the sight of all the pains and the desolate death He was about to endure, chose to suffer this human weakness. *The spirit indeed is ready, but the flesh is weak*—(Matt. xxvi. 41); and He prayed to His Divine Father that, if it were possible, the chalice might pass from Him. But immediately He added: *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt*—(Matt. xxvi. 39). And for the whole time that He continued praying in the Garden He repeated the same prayer: *Thy will be done! and for the third time he prayed, saying the*

same thing—(Matt. xxvi. 42-44). With those words, *Thy will be done*! Jesus Christ merited and obtained for us resignation in all adversity, and gained for His Martyrs and Confessors strength to resist all the persecutions and torments of tyrants. "This word," says St. Leo, "inflamed all the Confessors, it crowned all the Martyrs."

Thus also, by the horror He experienced at our sins, which caused Him to fall into a bitter agony in the Garden, Jesus merited for us contrition for our sins. His abandonment by the Father on the Cross merited for us strength to retain our courage in all desolations and darknesses of spirit. By bowing His head in death on the Cross, in obedience to the will of the Father, He merited for us all the victories we gain over passions and temptations; and patience in the pains of life, and especially in the bitternesses and straits we endure in death. In a word, St. Leo writes that Jesus Christ came to take our infirmities and distresses, in order to communicate to us His strength and constancy.

St. Paul says that though Jesus Christ was the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things He suffered; from which we are to understand not that Jesus in His Passion learned the virtue of obedience not known previously, but, as St. Anselm says, He learned not only by the knowledge He had before, but by actual experience in the grievous death He endured in order to obey His Father. And at the same time He experienced how great is the merit of obedience, for by this He obtained for Himself the utmost height of glory, a throne at His Father's right hand, and eternal salvation for us. Therefore the Apostle adds: *And being consummated, he became to all that obey him the cause of eternal salvation*—(Heb. v. 9). He says, *being consummated*, because, having completely fulfilled all obedience, by suffering patiently what He endured in His Passion, Jesus Christ became the cause of eternal life to all those who obediently suffer with patience the troubles of this present life.

Thursday—Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

II.—WE MUST DETACH OURSELVES FROM THE WORLD.

St. Ambrose says that they die well who, at the hour of death, are found dead to the world. Unless we detach ourselves from everything in this world, and do so voluntarily, we shall have to do it of necessity at death, but then with great sorrow and at peril to our eternal salvation.

I.

In order to die a happy death it is necessary to endeavour to be at all times such as we desire to be found at the hour of death. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*—(Apoc. xiv. 13). St. Ambrose says that they die well who, at the hour of death, are found dead to the world; that is, detached from the goods from which death will separate us by force. We ought then, from this moment, to accept the spoliation of our goods, and the separation from relatives and from everything in this world. Unless we do it voluntarily during life, we shall have to do it through necessity at death, but with extreme pain and great danger of eternal perdition. Hence St. Augustine says that to settle during life all temporal matters and dispose by will of all the goods we shall have to bequeath, contributes greatly to a tranquil death; because when all worldly affairs are already adjusted, the soul can be entirely occupied in uniting itself to God. At that hour we should think and speak only of God and of Paradise.

Those last moments are too precious to be squandered in earthly thoughts. At death is completed the crown of the elect; for it is then, perhaps that they reap the greatest harvest of merits, by embracing, with resignation and love, death and all its pains.

But the Christian who has not been in the habit of exciting these sentiments during life, will not have them at the hour of death. Hence some devout souls, with great spiritual profit to themselves, are accustomed to renew every month, after being at Confession and Communion, the *Protestation for Death** along with the Christian acts, imagining themselves at the point of death, and to be near their departure from this world. Unless you do this during life you will find it very difficult to do it at death. In her last illness, that great servant of God, Sister Catherine of St. Albert, of the Order of St. Teresa, sent forth a sigh, and said, "Sisters, I do not sigh through fear of death, for I have lived for twenty-five years in expectation of it; but I sigh at the sight of so many deluded Christians, who spend their life in sin and reduce themselves to the necessity of making peace with God at death, when I can scarcely pronounce the Name of Jesus."

O my Redeemer, Thy death is my hope. To Thy wounded hands I recommend my soul. *Into thy hands I commend my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of Truth*—(Ps. xxx. 6). O my Jesus, Thou hast given Thy Blood for my salvation: do not suffer me to be separated from Thee. I love Thee, O eternal God, and hope to love Thee for eternity. Mary, my Mother, assist me at the awful moment of death. To thee I now consign my soul; I recommend myself to thee. Deliver me from hell.

II.

Examine, then, if you are now attached to anything on this earth, to any person, to any honour, to your house, to your money, to conversations or amusements;

* See Vol. I, Part II, pages 377-385.

and reflect that you are not immortal. You must one day, and perhaps very soon, take leave of them all. Why, then, do you cherish any attachment to them, and thus expose yourself to the risk of an unhappy death? Offer from this moment all to God: tell Him you are ready to give up all things whenever He pleases to deprive you of them. If you wish to die with resignation you must from this moment resign yourself to all the contradictions and adversities which may happen to you, and must divest yourself of all affections to earthly things. Imagine yourself to be on the bed of death, and you will despise all things in this world. "He," says St. Jerome, "who always thinks that he is one day to die readily despises all things."

If you have not yet chosen a state of life, make choice of that state of life which at death you will wish to have selected, and which will make you die with greater peace. If you have already made your choice of a state of life, do now what at death you will wish to have done in that state. Spend every day as if it were the last of your life; and perform every action, every exercise of prayer; make every Confession and Communion as if they were the last of your life. Imagine yourself every hour at the point of death, stretched on a bed, and that you hear that *Proficiscere de hoc mundo* which announces your departure from this world. Oh! how powerfully will this thought assist you to walk in the way of God, and to detach your heart from this earth! *Blessed is that servant whom, when his Lord shall come, he shall find him so doing*—(Matt. xxiv. 46). He who expects death every hour will die well, though death should come suddenly upon him.

Every Christian should be prepared to say at the moment the news of death is announced to him: Then, my God, only a few hours remain; during the short remainder of the present life, I wish to love Thee to the utmost of my power, that I may love Thee more perfectly in Heaven. But little remains for me to offer to Thee. I offer Thee these pains, and the sacrifice of my life in union with the sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered

for me on the Cross. Lord, the pains which I suffer are few and light compared with what I have deserved; such as they are, I embrace them as a mark of the love which I bear Thee. Provided I am to love Thee for eternity, I resign myself to all the punishments Thou wishest to send me in this or the next life. Chastise me as much as Thou pleasest, but do not deprive me of Thy love. I know that, on account of having so often despised Thy love, I deserved never more to love Thee; but Thou canst not reject a penitent soul. I am sorry, O Sovereign Good, for having offended Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart, and place all my trust in Thee.

Spiritual Reading

AVOIDING THE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

We read in the Gospel that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and also that Lazarus rose. Christ rose to die no more—*Christ rising from the dead dieth now no more*—(Rom. vi. 9). Lazarus, too, rose, but died again. The Abbot Guerric remarks that Christ arose free and unbound, but Lazarus *came forth bound feet and hands*—(Jo. xi. 44). Miserable the man, adds this author, who rises from sin, yet linked to any dangerous occasion: he will die again by losing the Divine grace. He, then, who wishes to save his soul, must not only abandon sin, but also the occasions of sin; that is, he must renounce such an intimacy, such a house; he must renounce those wicked companions, and all similar occasions that incite him to sin.

In consequence of original sin we all have an inclination to do what is forbidden. Hence St. Paul complained that he experienced in himself a law opposed to reason: *But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin*—(Rom. vii. 23). Now, when a dangerous

occasion is present, it violently excites our corrupt desires, so that it is then very difficult to resist them : because God withholds efficacious helps from those who voluntarily expose themselves by going into or remaining in the occasion of sin. *He that loveth danger shall perish in it*—(Ecclus. iii. 27). "When," says St. Thomas, "we expose ourselves to danger, God abandons us in it." St. Bernardine of Sienna teaches that the counsel of avoiding the occasions of sin is the best of all counsels, and, as it were, the foundation of religion.

St. Peter says that *the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour*—(1 Pet. v. 8). He is constantly going about seeking our souls, and endeavouring to enter and take possession of them. Hence he seeks to place before us the occasions of sin, by which he enters the soul, says St. Cyprian. When the soul yields to the suggestions of the devil, and exposes itself to the occasions of sin, he easily enters and devours it. The ruin of our First Parents arose from their not flying from the occasion of sin. We read that in answer to the wicked serpent tempting her Eve said : *God hath commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it*—(Gen. iii. 3). But *she saw, took, and ate* the forbidden fruit : she first *looked at it*, she then *took it into her hands*, and afterwards *ate it*. This is what ordinarily happens to all who expose themselves to the occasions of sin. Hence, being once compelled by exorcisms to tell what sermon displeased him the most, the devil confessed that it was the sermon on avoiding the occasions of sin. As long as we expose ourselves to the occasions of sin, the devil laughs at all our good purposes and all our promises made to God. The greatest care of the enemy is to induce us not to abandon evil occasions; for these occasions, like a veil placed before the eyes, prevent us from seeing either the lights received from God, or the Eternal Truths, or the resolutions we have made : in a word, they make us forget all, and as it were force us into sin.

Know it to be a communication with death; for thou

art going in the midst of snares—(Ecclus. ix. 20). Every one born in this world enters into the midst of snares. Hence the Wise Man advises those who wish to guard themselves securely against the snares of the world to withdraw from them, for *he that is aware of the snares shall be secure*—(Prov. xi. 15). But if, instead of withdrawing from them, a Christian goes near to them; how can he avoid being caught by them? Hence, after having with so much loss learned the danger of exposing himself to the danger of sin, David said that to continue faithful to God he kept at a distance from every occasion which could lead him to relapse. *I have restrained my feet from every evil way that I may keep thy words*—(Ps. cxviii. 101). He does not say from every sin, but from every evil way which conducts to sin.

The devil is careful to find pretexts to make us believe that certain occasions to which we expose ourselves are not voluntary but necessary. When the occasion in which we are placed is really necessary, the Lord always helps us to avoid sin; but we sometimes imagine certain necessities which are not sufficient to excuse us. "A treasure is never safe," says St. Cyprian, "as long as a robber is harboured within; nor is a lamb secure while it dwells in the same den with a wolf." The Saint speaks against those who do not wish to remove themselves from the occasions of sin, and say: "I am not afraid I shall fall." As no one can be secure of his treasure if he keeps a thief in his house, and as a lamb cannot be sure of its life if it remains in the den of a wolf, so likewise no one can be secure of the treasure of Divine grace if he is resolved to continue in the occasion of sin. St. James teaches that every man has within himself a powerful enemy, that is, his own evil inclinations, which tempt him to sin. *Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, drawn away and allured*—(James i. 14). If, then, we do not fly from the external occasions, how can we resist temptations and avoid sin? Let us, therefore, place before our eyes the general remedy which Jesus has prescribed for conquering

temptations and saving our souls. *If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee* —(Matt. v. 29). If you find that your right eye is to you a cause of damnation, you must pull it out and cast it far from you; which means that when there is danger of losing your soul you must fly from all evil occasions, cost what it may.

St. Francis of Assisi used to say that the devil does not seek, in the beginning, to bind timorous souls with the chain of mortal sin; because they would be alarmed at the thought of committing mortal sin, and would fly from it with horror. He endeavours to bind them by a single thread which does not excite much fear; for by this means he will succeed more easily in strengthening their bonds and by degrees make them his slaves. Hence he who wishes to be free from the danger of being the slave of hell must break all the threads by which the enemy attempts to bind him; that is, he must avoid all occasions of sin, such as certain salutations, letters, little presents, and words of affection. With regard to those who have had a habit of impurity, it will not be sufficient to avoid proximate occasions; if they do not fly from remote occasions they will very easily relapse into their former sins.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

By the patience of Jesus Christ the holy Martyrs were animated and strengthened to embrace with patience the most cruel torments the cruelty of tyrants could devise; and not only with patience, but with joy and a desire to suffer for the love of Jesus Christ. In the

celebrated letter which St. Ignatius the Martyr wrote to the Romans after he had been condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts, and was on his way to the place of his Martyrdom, we read: "Suffer me, my children, to be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may become corn for my Redeemer. I seek only Him Who died for me. He Who is the only object of my love was crucified for me, and the love I bear to Him makes me desire to be crucified for Him." St. Leo writes of St. Laurence the Martyr that when he lay upon the grid-iron the flames which burned him without were less hot than the fire that burned within him. Eusebius and Palladius relate of St. Potamena, a virgin of Alexandria, that when she was condemned to be thrown into a cauldron of boiling pitch that she might suffer the more for the love of her crucified Spouse, she prayed the tyrant to have her thrust in little by little, that her death might become more torturing; and she had her desire, for they began by thrusting her feet into the pitch, so that she was for three hours in this torment, and did not die till the pitch reached her neck. Such was the patience, such the fortitude which the Martyrs gained from the Passion of Jesus Christ.

II.

It was the courage and fortitude which Jesus crucified infuses into those who love Him that made St. Paul say: *Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness or danger, or persecution, or the sword?* —(Rom. viii. 35). And at the same time he says: *In all these things we overcome because of him that hath loved us*—(Rom. viii. 37). The love of the Martyrs for Jesus Christ was unconquerable, because it gained its strength from Him Who is unconquerable, Who strengthened them to suffer. And let us not imagine that the torments of the Martyrs were miraculously deprived of their power of torturing, or that their heavenly consolations dulled the pains of the torments; this perhaps

may sometimes have happened, but ordinarily they truly felt all their pains, and many through weakness yielded to the pangs; so that in the case of those who were constant in suffering, their patience was entirely the gift of God Who gave them their strength.

The first object of our hope is eternal blessedness, that is, the blessedness of God—*the fruition of God*, as St. Thomas teaches. And all the means which are necessary for obtaining salvation, which consists in the enjoyment of God—such as the pardon of our sins, final perseverance in Divine grace, and a good death—we must hope for, not from our own strength, nor our good resolutions, but solely from the merits and grace of Jesus Christ. That our confidence, therefore, may be firm, let us believe with infallible certainty that we must look for the accomplishment of all these means of salvation only to the merits of Jesus Christ.

Friday—Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

JUDGMENT AFTER DEATH.

The soul goes forth and leaves the body. The priest recites the prayers of the Church: Come to his assistance all ye Saints of God! Meet him all ye Angels of God, receive his soul and present it before the Lord. But of what avail will it be to call upon the Saints and Angels to assist, if the soul has already departed as an enemy of God and the sentence has already been passed?

I.

Consider that your soul will no sooner have departed from the body than it will appear before the Tribunal of God to be judged. This Judge is the Almighty Whose wrath is provoked by your sins. Your accuser will be your mortal enemy, the devil. The matter of your trial will be your sins. Your sentence will be without appeal; and if found guilty, your punishment will be hell. You will not have the power of calling your parents, friends, and companions to your aid: all must be concluded between God and your soul. You will then see the deformity of your crimes, and will not be able, as at present, to excuse them. You will be examined upon all your sins, of thought, of word, of action, of omission, of scandal; you will be weighed in the awful scales of Divine justice, and, if found wanting in a single point, you will be lost.

Consider that, at the end of the world, our bodies will rise again to participate in the reward or punishment of the soul according to our works, when all the nations of the earth will be assembled in the Valley of Josaphat to be judged. If you are condemned you will resume your body as an eternal prison for your unfortunate soul. At this sorrowful reunion the soul will curse the body and the body the soul, so that, although at present they mutually consent to pursue unlawful pleasures, after death they will become each other's tormentors. On the other hand, if you are saved, your body will arise beautiful, impassible, and glorious, and thus, both in body and soul, you will be judged worthy of eternal happiness. Thus will close the scene of this world: thus will terminate all the greatness, all the pleasures, and all the pomps of the earth. Yes, all will be at an end; nothing will remain but two Eternities, one of glory the other of pain; one of joy, the other of torments: the just will dwell in Heaven, the wicked in hell. Woe, then, to him who has loved the world! Woe to him who for the vain and fleeting pleasures of the earth has lost his soul, his body, Heaven, and God!

O my Jesus, pardon me before Thou comest to judge me!

II.

Consider the Eternal Sentence Jesus Christ will pass upon the reprobate and the Elect. This sovereign Judge, turning towards the reprobate, will say: "Behold, ye ungrateful wretches, the result of your crimes! My hour is come—the hour of truth, of justice, of vengeance, and of wrath. Criminal souls, you have chosen My curse; let it fall upon you: be ye cursed for all eternity. Depart from Me, despoiled of every good and laden with all evil, into eternal fire." Then turning towards the Elect Jesus will thus address them: "Come, ye blessed children of My heavenly Father, come and take possession of the Kingdom of Heaven which is prepared for you. Come, no longer to carry your cross after Me, but to wear a crown. Come to inherit My riches, and to be the companions of My glory. Come from the land of exile to your true country; come from sufferings to glory, from tears to joy." O my Jesus, I hope to be one of those whom Thou wilt then bless. I love Thee above all things. Bless me at this moment. O my Mother Mary, do thou also bless me.

Spiritual Reading

AVOIDING THE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

Impurity is a vice which makes war on all men, says St. Augustine, and which only the few conquer. The fight is constant, the victory rare. Oh, how many miserable souls have exposed themselves in a battle with this vice, and have been defeated! To induce you to expose yourselves to occasions of this sin, the devil will tell you not to be afraid of being overcome by the temptation. "I do not wish," says St. Jerome, "to

risk a fight for the joy of the victory lest I should sometimes lose the victory." I will not expose myself to the combat with the hope of conquering, because, by voluntarily engaging in the fight, I may lose my soul and my God. To escape defeat in this struggle a great grace of God is necessary; and to render ourselves worthy of this grace we must, on our part, avoid the occasions of sin. To practise the virtue of chastity it is necessary to recommend ourselves continually to God; we have not strength to preserve it; that strength must be the gift of God. *And as I knew*, says the Wise Man, *that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it . . . I went to the Lord, and besought him*—(Wis. viii. 21). But if we expose ourselves to the occasions of sin, we ourselves shall provide our rebellious flesh with arms to make war against our soul. *Neither*, says the Apostle, *yield ye your members as instruments of sin unto iniquity*—(Rom. vi. 13). In explaining this passage, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "You stimulate the flesh; you arm it, and make it powerful against the spirit." St. Philip Neri used to say that in the war against the vice of impurity, the victory is gained by cowards—that is, by those who fly from the occasions of this sin. But the man who exposes himself to it arms the flesh and renders it so powerful that it will be morally impossible for him to resist its attacks.

The Lord said to Isaias the Prophet: *Cry: all flesh is grass*—(Is. xl. 6). Now, says St. John Chrysostom, if all flesh is grass, it is as foolish for a man who exposes himself to the occasion of sin to hope to preserve the virtue of purity as to expect that dry grass, into which a torch has been thrown, will not take fire. "Put a torch into hay and then dare to deny that the hay will burn." No, says St. Cyprian; it is impossible to stand in the midst of flames, and not to burn. *Can a man*, says the Holy Ghost, *hide fire in his bosom and his garments not burn? or can he walk upon hot coals and his feet not be burnt?*—(Prov. vi. 27). Not to be burnt in such circumstances would be a

miracle. St. Bernard teaches that to preserve chastity and at the same time to expose one's self to the proximate occasion of sin, "is a greater miracle than to raise a dead man to life."

In explaining the Fifth Psalm, St. Augustine says that "he who is unwilling to fly from danger wishes to perish in it." Hence, in another place, he exhorts those who wish to conquer, and not to perish, to avoid dangerous occasions. "In the danger of falling into sin, take flight if you desire to gain the victory." Some foolishly trust in their own strength, and do not see that their strength is like that of tow placed in the fire. *And your strength shall be as the ashes of tow*—(Is. i. 31). Others, trusting in the change which has taken place in their life, in their Confessions, and in the promises they have made to God, say: Through the grace of the Lord I have now no bad motive in seeking the company of such a person; her presence is not even an occasion of temptations. There are bears that go in quest of monkeys and feed upon them: as soon as a bear appears the monkeys run up the trees and thus save themselves. But what does the bear do? He stretches himself on the ground as if dead, and waits till they descend from the trees. The moment they have descended the bear springs up and devours them. It is thus the devil acts: he makes the temptation appear to be dead; but when a soul descends and exposes itself to the occasion of sin, he stirs up temptation and devours it.

Oh, how many miserable souls, devoted to spiritual things, to mental prayer, to frequent Communion, and to a life of holiness, have, by exposing themselves to the occasion of sin, become the slaves of the devil! We find in Ecclesiastical History that a holy woman who employed herself in the pious office of burying the Martyrs once found among them one who was not as yet dead. She brought him into her own house and procured a physician till he recovered. But what happened? These two saints—as they might be called—(one of them on the point of being a Martyr, the other devoting her

time to works of mercy with so much risk of being persecuted by the tyrants) first fell into sin and lost the grace of God, and, becoming weaker by sin, afterwards denied the Faith. St. Macarius relates a similar fact regarding an old man who suffered to be half-burned in defence of the Faith, but being brought back into prison, he, unfortunately for himself, formed an intimacy with a devout woman who served the Martyrs, and fell into sin.

The Holy Ghost tells us that we must fly from sin as from a serpent. *Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent*—(Ecclus. xxi. 2). Hence, as we not only avoid the bite of a serpent, but are careful neither to touch nor approach it, so we must fly not only from sin but also from the occasion of sin—that is, from the house, the conversation, the person that would lead us to sin. St. Isidore says that he who wishes to remain near a serpent will not remain long unhurt. Hence, if any person is likely to prove an occasion of your ruin, the admonition of the Wise Man is : *Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the doors of her house*—(Prov. v. 8). He not only tells you not to enter the house which has been to you a road to hell—*Her house is the way to hell*—(Prov. vii. 27)—but he also cautions you not to approach it, and even to keep at a distance from it : *Remove thy way far from her.*

But, you will say, if I abandon that house my temporal affairs will suffer. It is better that you should suffer a temporal loss than that you should lose your soul and your God. You must be persuaded that, in whatever regards chastity, there cannot be too great caution. If we wish to save our souls from sin and hell we must always fear and tremble. *With fear and trembling work out your salvation*—(Phil. ii. 12). He who is not fearful, but exposes himself to occasions of sin, shall scarcely be saved. Hence in our prayers we ought to say every day, and several times in the day, that petition of the *Our Father* "and lead us not into temptation." Lord, do not permit me to be attacked by those temptations which would deprive me of Thy

grace. We cannot merit the grace of perseverance; but, according to St. Augustine, God grants it to every one that asks it, because He has promised to hear all who pray to Him. Hence the holy Doctor says that the Lord "by His promises has made Himself a debtor."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

In speaking of the pardon of our sins we should ever remember that it was for this very end that our Redeemer came upon earth—to pardon sinners: *The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost*—(Matt. xviii. 11). Therefore the Baptist, when he showed to the Jews that the Messias was already come, said: *Behold the Lamb of God . . . that taketh away the sin of the world*—(Jo. i. 29). As it was foretold by Isaias: *As a lamb before his shearers, he shall be dumb*—(Is. liii. 7); and also by Jeremias: *I am as a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim*—(Jer. xi. 19). And first, He was foreshadowed by Moses in the Paschal Lamb, and by the sacrifice of a lamb to God under the Law every morning, and by other evening sacrifices. All these lambs, however, could not take away a single sin; they served only to represent the sacrifice of the Divine Lamb Jesus Christ, Who with His Blood would wash our souls, and thus free them both from the stain of sin and from the eternal punishment of sin, for this is implied by the words *take away;* taking upon Himself the duty of satisfying the Divine justice for us by His death, according to what Isaias wrote: *The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all*—(Is. liii. 6). Wherefore St. Cyril writes: "One is slain for all, and the

whole human race is restored to God the Father." By dying, Jesus desired to regain for God all mankind that was lost.

Oh, how great is the debt we owe to Jesus Christ! If a criminal condemned to death were already standing at the gibbet with the rope around his neck, and a friend were to come and take the rope and bind it around himself and die in place of the guilty man, how great would be that man's obligation to love him! This is what Jesus Christ has done; He has been willing to die on the Cross to deliver us from eternal death.

II.

Jesus Christ, as St. Peter says, *bore our sins in his body upon the tree that we being dead to sin should live to justice, by whose stripes you are healed*—(1 Pet. ii. 24). "What can be more wonderful," says St. Bonaventure, "than that wounds should heal, and death give life?" St. Paul says that God *has graced us in his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which hath superabounded in us*—(Eph. i. 6). And this resulted from the covenant made by Jesus Christ with His Divine Father, that He would pardon us our offences, and receive us into His favour for the sake of the Passion and Death of His Son. As in the Old Law, by the blood of the victims the outward defilement of sins was taken away, and the temporal punishment due to them was remitted; so, in the New Law, the Blood of Jesus Christ washes away the inward stain of sin, according to St. John's words: *He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*—(Apoc. i. 5).

St. Paul thus explains the whole truth in his Epistle to the Hebrews: *Christ being come an High Priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, neither by the blood of goats . . . but by his own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption*—(Heb. ix. 11-12). The high-priest

entered into the Holy of Holies, and, by the sprinkling of the blood of animals, purged sinners from their outward defilement and from temporal punishment; for in order to obtain the pardon of sin, and for their liberation from eternal punishment, Contrition, Faith, and Hope in the coming of the Messias, Who was about to die to obtain pardon for them, were absolutely necessary for the Jews. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, by means of His own body (which was the greater and more perfect tabernacle spoken of by the Apostle), which was sacrificed on the Cross, entered into the Holy of Holies of Heaven, which was closed to us, and opened it to us by means of this Redemption.

Therefore St. Paul, in order to encourage us to hope for the pardon of all our sins, by trusting in the Blood of Jesus Christ, goes on to say: *If the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkled sanctify to the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, by the Holy Spirit, offered himself without stain to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God* —(Heb. ix. 13, 14).

Saturday—Fifteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

If, says St. Bernard, thou canst not imitate the virginity, imitate the humility of this humble Virgin. She detests the proud and invites only the humble to come to her: *Whoever is a little one let him come to me.*

I.

There can be no doubt, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says, that of all virtues there is, perhaps none the practice of which is more difficult to our nature, corrupted as it is by sin, than that of humility. But there is no escape; we can never be true children of Mary if we are not humble. "If," says St. Bernard, "thou canst not imitate the virginity of this humble Virgin, imitate her humility." She detests the proud, and invites only the humble to come to her: *Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me*—(Prov. ix. 4). "Mary," says Richard of St. Laurence, "protects us under the mantle of humility." The Mother of God herself explained to St. Bridget what her mantle was, saying, "Come, my daughter, and hide thyself under my mantle; this mantle is my humility." She then added that the consideration of her humility was a good mantle with which we could warm ourselves; but that as a mantle only renders this service to those who wear it, not in thought but in deed, "so also would her humility be of no avail except to those who endeavoured to imitate it." She then concluded in these words: "Therefore, my daughter, clothe thyself with this humility."

II.

"Oh, how dear to Mary are humble souls!" says St. Bernard. This Blessed Virgin, he says, recognizes and loves those who love her, and is near to all who call upon her; and especially to those whom she sees like unto herself in chastity and humility. Hence the Saint exhorts all who love Mary to be humble: "Emulate this virtue of Mary if thou lovest her." Marinus, or Martin d'Alberto, of the Society of Jesus, used to sweep the house and collect the refuse through love for this Blessed Virgin. The Divine Mother one day appeared to him, as Father Nieremberg relates in his Life, and, thanking him, said: "Oh, how pleasing to me is this humble action done for my love!"

Then, O my Queen, I can never be really thy child

unless I am humble; but dost thou not see that my sins, after having rendered me ungrateful to my Lord, have also made me proud? O my Mother, do thou supply a remedy. By the merit of thy humility obtain that I may be truly humble, and thus become thy child. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE SIGH, MOURNING AND WEEPING IN THIS VALLEY OF TEARS.

As we have access to the Eternal Father, says St. Bernard, only through Jesus Christ, so have we access to Jesus Christ only through Mary: "By thee we have access to the Son, O blessed finder of grace, bearer of life, and Mother of Salvation, that we may receive Him by thee, Who through thee was given to us." This is the reason given by the Saint why our Lord has determined that all men shall be saved by the intercession of Mary; and therefore he calls her the Mother of Grace and of our Salvation.

"Then," asks St. Germanus, "what will become of us? What hope can we have of salvation, if thou dost abandon us, O Mary, who art the life of Christians?"

"But," says a modern critic already quoted, "if all graces come through Mary, when we implore the intercession of the other Saints, they must have recourse to the mediation of Mary. But that," he says, "no one believes or ever dreamed of."

As to believing it, I reply that in that there can be no error or difficulty. What difficulty can there be in saying that God, in order to honour His Mother, and having made her Queen of Saints, and willing that all graces shall be dispensed by her hands, should also will that the Saints should address themselves to her to obtain favours for their clients?

And as to saying that no one ever dreamed of such a thing, I find that St. Bernard, St. Anselm, St. Bonaventure, Suarez, and others, expressly declare it to be the case. "In vain," says St. Bernard, "would a person ask other Saints for a favour if Mary did not interpose to obtain it." Another author, explaining the words of the Psalm: *All the rich among the people shall entreat thy countenance*—(Ps. xliv. 13), says "that the Saints are the rich of that great people of God, who, when they wish to obtain a favour from God for their clients, recommend themselves to Mary, and she immediately obtains it." And Father Suarez correctly remarks that "we beg the Saints to be our intercessors with Mary, because she is their Queen and sovereign Lady." "Amongst the Saints," he says, "we do not make use of one to intercede with the other, as all are of the same order; but we do ask them to intercede with Mary, because she is their Sovereign and Queen." And this is precisely what St. Benedict promised to St. Frances of Rome, as we read in Father Marchese; for he appeared to her, and taking her under his protection, he promised that he would be her advocate with the Divine Mother.

In confirmation of this, St. Anselm addresses our Blessed Lady and says: "O Lady, whatever all the Saints, united with thee, can obtain, thou canst obtain alone." "And why is this?" asks the Saint; "why is it that thou alone hast such great power? Ah, it is because thou alone art the Mother of our common Redeemer; thou art the Spouse of God; thou art the universal Queen of Heaven and earth. If thou dost not speak for us, no Saint will pray for or help us. But if thou beginnest to pray for us, then will all the Saints do the same and succour us."

So that Father Segneri, in his *Devout Client of Mary*, applying with the Catholic Church the words of Ecclesiasticus to her: *I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 8), says that "as the first sphere by its motion sets all the others in motion, so it is when Mary prays for a soul; immediately the whole heavenly court begins to pray with her." "Nay, more," says

St. Bonaventure, "whenever the most sacred Virgin goes to God to intercede for us, she, as Queen, commands all the Angels and Saints to accompany her, and unite their prayers to hers."

And thus, finally, do we understand why the Holy Church requires that we should salute and invoke the Divine Mother under the glorious title of "our hope." *Spes nostra, salve!* The impious Luther said that he "could not endure that the Roman Church should call Mary, who is only a creature, 'our hope' "; "for," said he, "God alone, and Jesus Christ as our Mediator, are our Hope: and God curses those who place their hope in a creature, according to the Prophet Jeremias: *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man*"—(Jer. xvii. 5). But the Church teaches us to invoke Mary on all occasions, and to call her "Our Hope"—*Hail, our hope!* Whoever places his confidence in a creature independently of God, certainly is cursed by God; for God is the only source and dispenser of every good, and the creature without God is nothing, and can give nothing. But if our Lord has so disposed it, as we have already proved that He has done, that all graces should pass through Mary as by a channel of mercy, we not only can but ought to assert that she, by whose means we receive the Divine graces, is truly our hope.

Therefore St. Bernard says that "she is his greatest confidence and the whole foundation of his hope." St. John Damascene says the same thing, for he thus addresses the most Blessed Virgin: "O Lady, in thee have I placed all my hope; and with my eyes fixed on thee, from thee do I expect salvation." St. Thomas says that "Mary is the whole hope of our salvation," and St. Ephrem, addressing her, says: "O most holy Virgin, receive us under thy protection, if thou wilt see us saved, for we have no hope of salvation but through thy means."

Let us, then, in the words of St. Bernard, "endeavour to venerate this Divine Mother with the whole affection of our hearts; for such is the will of God, Who is pleased that we should receive every good thing from her hand."

And therefore the Saint exhorts us, whenever we desire or ask for any grace, to recommend ourselves to Mary, and to be assured that we shall receive it by her means; for he says that if thou dost not deserve the favour from God, Mary, who will ask it for thee, will deserve to receive it. "Because thou wast unworthy of the gift, it was bestowed on Mary, that through her thou mightest receive all that thou hast." The Saint then advises us to recommend all that we offer to God to the care of Mary, be they good works or prayers, if we wish our Lord to accept them. "Whatever thou mayest offer to God, be sure to recommend it to Mary, in order not to meet with a repulse."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

To obtain perseverance in well-doing we must not trust in our resolutions and in the promises we have made to God; if we trust in our own strength we are lost. All our hope of preserving the grace of God must be placed in the merits of Jesus Christ, and thus, trusting in His help, we shall persevere till death, though we be attacked by all our enemies in earth and in hell. Sometimes we find ourselves so cast down in mind and so assaulted by temptations, that we seem to be almost lost; let us not then lose courage, nor abandon ourselves to despair; let us go to the Crucified, and He will sustain us.

The Lord permits His Saints sometimes to find themselves in tempests and fears. St. Paul says that the afflictions and terrors he suffered in Asia were so overpowering that he became weary of life; meaning that he was so, as far as he depended on his own strength.

This is to teach us that God, from time to time, leaves us in desolations, in order that we may know our misery, and, distrusting ourselves, may humbly have recourse to His goodness, and obtain from Him strength not to fall. More clearly he expresses the same in another place : *We are cast down, but we perish not*—(2 Cor. iv. 9). We find ourselves oppressed with sadness and passions, but do not abandon ourselves to despair; we are tossed about on the water, but do not sink, because the Lord, by His grace, gives us strength against our enemies. But the Apostle exhorts us ever to keep before our eyes that we are weak, and prone to lose the treasure of Divine grace, and that all our strength for preserving it comes not from ourselves but from God : *We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency may be of the power of God and not of us*—(2 Cor. iv. 7).

II.

Let us be firmly persuaded that in this life we must ever beware of placing any confidence in our own works. Our strongest armour with which we shall ever win the victory over the assaults of hell is prayer. This is the armour of God of which St. Paul speaks : *Put on the armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. Therefore, take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one; and take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit (which is the word of God), by all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the Spirit*—(Eph. vi. 11-18).

Wherefore the Apostle continues : *By all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints*—(Eph. vi. 18). Thus, prayer is the most powerful of all the arms with which God gives us victory over our evil passions and the temptations of hell; but this prayer must be made *in the spirit;* that is, not with the lips only, but with the heart. Moreover, it must last through our life—*at all times;* for as the struggle is constant, so must our prayer be. It must be urgent and repeated; if the temptation does not yield at the first prayer, we must repeat it a second, third, or fourth time; and if it still continues, we must add sighs, tears, importunity, vehemence, as if we would do violence to God, that He may give us the grace of victory. This is what the Apostle's words, *with all instance and supplication*, mean. The Apostle adds, *for all the saints*, which means that we are not to pray for ourselves alone, but for the perseverance of all the faithful who are in the grace of God, and especially of priests, that they may labour for the conversion of unbelievers and all sinners, repeating in our prayers the words of Zachary : *To enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death*—(Luke i. 79).

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"THE CHARITY OF CHRIST."
—(Ep. Ephesians iii. 13-21).

Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end. Jesus, knowing that the hour of His death was at hand, wished to leave men the greatest proof of His love by leaving us Himself in the Holy Eucharist. *He loved them unto the end.* That is "with an extreme affection," says St. John Chrysostom.

I.

Jesus, knowing that his hour was come . . . having loved his own . . . he loved them unto the end—(Jo. xiii. 1). Let us consider the love of Jesus Christ in leaving us Himself in the Most Holy Eucharist: *He loved them unto the end.* That is, according to St. John Chrysostom, "with an extreme affection."

St. Bernardine of Sienna says that the tokens of love which are given at death make a more lasting impression on the mind, and are more highly esteemed. But, whilst others leave a ring, or a piece of money, as a mark of their affection, Jesus has left us His entire Self in this Sacrament of love.

And when did Jesus Christ institute this Sacrament? He instituted it, as the Apostle has remarked, on the night before His Passion. *The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat: this is my*

body—(1 Cor. xi. 23-24). Thus, at the very time that men were preparing to put Him to death, our loving Redeemer resolved to bestow upon us this gift. Jesus Christ, then, was not content with giving His life for us on a Cross : He wished also, before His death, to pour out, as the Council of Trent says, all the riches of His love, by leaving Himself as our food in the Holy Communion. " He, as it were, poured out the riches of His love towards man." If Faith had not taught it, who could ever imagine that a God would become Man, and the food of His own creatures ? When Jesus Christ revealed to His followers this Sacrament which He intended to leave us, St. John says that they could not bring themselves to believe it, and many departed from Him, saying : *How can this man give us his flesh to eat? . . . This saying is hard, and who can hear it?* —(Jo. vi. 53-61). But what men could not imagine, the great love of Jesus Christ has invented and effected. *Take ye and eat : this is my body*—(1 Cor. xi. 24). These words He addressed to His Apostles on the night before He suffered, and He now, after His death, addresses them to us.

II.

How highly honoured, says St. Francis de Sales, would that man feel to whom a prince sent from his table a portion of what he had on his own plate ! But Jesus gives us not a portion of His own food but His entire Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. " He gave you all," says St. John Chrysostom, reproving our ingratitude : " He left nothing for Himself." And St. Thomas teaches that in the Eucharist God has given us all that He is and all that He has. Justly, then, has the same saint called the Eucharist " a Sacrament of love, a pledge of love." It is a Sacrament of love, because it was pure love that induced Jesus Christ to give us this gift and pledge of love ; for He wished that, should a doubt of His having loved us ever enter into our minds, we should have in this Sacrament a pledge of His love. St. Bernard calls this Sacrament " Love of loves." By

His Incarnation the Lord has given Himself to all men in general; but, in this Sacrament He has given Himself to each of us in particular, to make us understand the special love He entertains for each of us.

Oh, how ardently does Jesus Christ desire to come to our souls in the Holy Communion! This vehement desire He expressed at the time of the institution of this Sacrament, when He said to the Apostles: *With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you*—(Luke xxii. 15). St. Laurence Justinian says that these words proceeded from the enamoured Heart of Jesus Christ, Who by such tender expressions, wished to show us the ardent love with which He loved us. "This is the voice of the most burning charity." And, to induce us to receive Him frequently in the Holy Communion, He promises eternal life—that is, the *kingdom of Heaven*—to those who eat His Flesh. *He that eateth this bread shall live forever* —(Jo. vi. 59). On the other hand, He threatens to deprive us of His grace and Paradise if we neglect Communion. *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you* —(Jo. vi. 54). These promises and these threats all sprung from a burning desire to come to us in this Sacrament.

Spiritual Reading

"THE CHARITY OF CHRIST."

Why does Jesus so ardently desire that we should receive Him in the Holy Communion? It is because He takes delight in being united with each of us. By Holy Communion, Jesus is really united to our soul and to our body, and we are then united to Jesus. *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him*—(Jo. vi. 57). Thus, after Communion, we are, says St. John Chrysostom, one body and one flesh with Jesus Christ. Hence St. Laurence Justinian

exclaims : " Oh, how wonderful is Thy love, O Lord Jesus. Who hast wished to incorporate us in such a manner with Thy Body that we should have one heart and one soul inseparably united with Thee !" Thus, to every soul that receives the Eucharist, the Lord says what He once said to His beloved servant Margaret of Ypres—" Behold, my daughter, the close union made between me and Thee ! Love Me, then, and let us remain forever united in love; let us nevermore be separated." This union between Jesus Christ and us is, according to St. John Chrysostom, the effect of the Charity of Christ towards us.

But, O Lord, such intimate union with man is not suited to Thy Divine majesty. But love seeks not reason; it goes not where it should, but where it is drawn. St. Bernardine of Sienna says that, in giving Himself for our food, Jesus Christ loved us to the last degree; because He united Himself entirely to us, as food is united to those who eat it. The same doctrine has been beautifully expressed by St. Francis de Sales : " No action of the Saviour can be more loving or more tender than the institution of the Holy Eucharist, in which Jesus, as it were, annihilates Himself, and takes the form of food, to unite Himself to the souls and bodies of His faithful servants."

Hence there is nothing from which we can draw so much fruit as the Holy Communion. St. Denis teaches that the Most Holy Sacrament has greater efficacy to sanctify souls than all other spiritual means. St. Vincent Ferrer says that a soul derives more profit from one Communion than from fasting for a week on bread and water. The Eucharist is, according to the holy Council of Trent, a medicine which delivers us from daily faults, and preserves us from mortal sins. Jesus Himself has said that they who eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, which is the Fountain of life, shall receive permanently the life of grace. *He that eateth me, the same shall also live by me*—(Jo. vi. 58). Innocent III teaches that by the Passion Jesus Christ delivers us from the sins we have committed, and by the Eucharist saves us from

committing others. According to St. John Chrysostom, the Holy Communion inflames us with the fire of Divine love, and makes us objects of terror to the devil. "The Eucharist is a fire which inflames us, so that, like lions breathing fire, we may retire from the altar, being made terrible to the devil." In explaining the words of the Spouse in the Canticles: *He brought me into the cellar of wine; He set in order charity in me*—(Cant. ii. 4), St. Gregory says that the Communion is this cellar of wine in which the soul is so inebriated with Divine Charity that she forgets and loses sight of all earthly things.

Some will say: "I do not communicate often; because I am cold in Divine love." In answer to them Gerson asks: Will you, then, because you feel cold, remove from the fire? When you are tepid you should more frequently approach this Sacrament. St. Bonaventure says: "Trusting in the mercy of God, though you feel tepid, approach: let him who thinks himself unworthy reflect that the more infirm he feels himself, the more he requires a physician." And St. Francis de Sales writes: "Two sorts of persons ought to communicate often: the perfect, in order to persevere in holiness; and the imperfect, to arrive at perfection."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

In resisting our enemies in our spiritual combats it is of the very greatest benefit to anticipate them in our meditations, by preparing ourselves to do violence to them to our utmost power, on all occasions when they may suddenly come upon us. Thus the Saints have been able to preserve the greatest mildness, or at least not to

reply by a single word, and not to be disturbed, when they met with a great trial, a violent persecution, a severe pang in body or in mind, the loss of property of great value, the death of a much-loved relative. Such victories are ordinarily not acquired by anyone without the aid of long discipline, without frequenting Sacraments, and a continual exercise of Meditation, Spiritual Reading, and Prayer. Therefore these victories are with difficulty obtained by those who have not taken great heed to avoid dangerous occasions, or who are attached to the vanities or pleasures of the world, and practise very little mortification of the senses; by those, in a word, who live a soft and easy life. St. Augustine says that in the spiritual life, "first pleasures are to be conquered, then pains"; meaning that a person who is given to seeking the pleasures of the senses will scarcely resist a strong passion or a temptation which assails him; a man who loves the esteem of the world will scarcely endure a grave affront without losing the grace of God.

It is true that we must look for all our strength to live sinless lives, and to do good works, not from ourselves, but from the grace of Jesus Christ; but we must take great care not to make ourselves weaker than we are by nature, through our own fault. The defects of which we take no account will cause the Divine light to fail, and the devil will become stronger against us. For example, a desire to make a parade of our learning or our rank, or vanity in dress; the seeking of any superfluous pleasure; resentment at every inattentive word or action; a wish to please everyone though to our spiritual loss; neglect of works of piety through the fear of man; little acts of disobedience towards our Superiors; little murmurings; trifling but cherished aversions; trivial falsehoods; slight attacks upon our neighbour; loss of time in gossip; or the indulgence of curiosity—in a word, every attachment to earthly things, and every act of inordinate self-love, can help our enemy to drag us over some precipice; or, at least deprive us of that abundance of Divine help without which we may find ourselves in utter spiritual ruin.

II.

We grieve when we find ourselves so dry in spirit and desolate in prayer, in our Communions, and in all our devout exercises; but how can God give us to enjoy His presence and loving visits while we are niggardly and inattentive to Him? *He that sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly*—(2 Cor. ix. 6). If we cause Him so much displeasure, how can we expect to enjoy His heavenly consolations? If we do not detach ourselves from everything earthly, we shall never wholly belong to Jesus Christ, and where shall we look for protection? Jesus, by His humility, merited for us the grace of conquering pride; and by His poverty He merited strength for us to despise earthly goods; and by His patience, constancy in overcoming slights and injuries. "What pride," writes St. Augustine, "could have been healed, if not healed by the humility of the Son of God? What avarice, except by the poverty of Christ? What anger, except by the Saviour's patience?" But if we are cold in the love of Jesus Christ, and neglect to pray continually to Him to help us, and nourish in our hearts any earthly affection, with difficulty shall we persevere in a holy life. Let us pray. Let us pray always. With prayer we shall obtain everything.

O Saviour of the world, Thou art my only hope! By the merits of Thy Passion, deliver me from every impure desire which may hinder me from loving Thee as I ought. May I be stripped of all desires that savour of the world; grant that the only object of my desires may be Thyself, Who art the sovereign Good, and the only Good that is worthy of love. By Thy sacred Wounds heal my infirmities; give me grace to keep far from my heart every love which is not for Thee Who deservest all my love. O Jesus, my Love, Thou art my hope! O sweet words! sweet consolation—*Jesus, my Love! Thou art my hope!*

Monday—Sixteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"THE CHARITY OF CHRIST."

Jesus Christ, Who gives Himself to us through pure love, should be received by us through love, says St. Francis de Sales. When you communicate, then, desire, as our Lord directed St. Matilda, all the love any soul ever had for Jesus, and He will accept it in proportion to the fervour with which you wish for it.

I.

Two things are necessary in order to draw great fruit from Communion—Preparation for, and Thanksgiving after Communion. As to the Preparation, it is certain that the Saints derived great profit from their Communions only because they were careful to prepare themselves well for receiving the Holy Eucharist. It is easy, then, to understand why so many souls remain subject to the same imperfections after all their Communions. Cardinal Bona says that the defect is not in the food, but in the want of the proper dispositions. For frequent Communion two principal dispositions are required. The first is detachment from creatures, and disengagement of the heart from everything that is not God. The more the heart is occupied with earthly concerns, the less room there is in it for Divine Charity. Hence to give full possession of the whole heart to God it is necessary to purify it from worldly attachments. This is the preparation which Jesus Himself recom-

mended to St. Gertrude : " I ask nothing more of thee," said He to her, " than that thou come to receive Me with a heart divested of thyself." Let us, then, withdraw our affections from creatures, and our hearts will belong entirely to the Creator.

The second disposition necessary to draw great fruit from Communion is a desire of receiving Jesus Christ in order to advance in His love. " He," says St. Francis de Sales, " Who gives Himself through pure love, ought to be received only through love." Thus the principal end of our Communions must be to advance in the love of Jesus Christ. He once said to St. Matilda : " When you communicate, desire all the love that any soul has ever had for me, and I will accept your love in proportion to the fervour with which you wished for it."

II.

Thanksgiving after Communion is also necessary. The prayer we make after Communion is the most acceptable to God, and the most profitable to us. After Communion the soul should be employed in affections and petitions. The affections ought to consist not only in acts of thanksgiving, but also in acts of humility, of love, and of oblation of ourselves to God. Let us, then, humble ourselves as much as possible at the sight of a God made our Food even after we had offended Him. A learned author says that, for a soul after Communion, the most appropriate sentiment is one of astonishment at the thought of receiving a God. She should exclaim : " What ! God is come to me ! A God is come to me !" Let us also make many acts of the love of Jesus Christ. He has come into our souls in order to be loved. Hence He is greatly pleased with those who, after Communion, say to Him : " My Jesus, I love Thee; I desire only Thee !" Let us also offer ourselves and all that we have to Jesus Christ that He may dispose of all as He pleases : and let us frequently say : " My Jesus, Thou art all mine; Thou hast given Thyself entirely to me; I give myself entirely to Thee."

After Communion we should not only make these affections, but we ought also to present to God with great confidence many petitions for His graces. The time after Communion is a time in which we can gain treasures of Divine graces. St. Teresa says that at that time Jesus Christ remains in the soul as on a throne, saying to her what He said to the blind man : *What wilt thou that I should do to thee?*—(Mark x. 51). Now that you possess Me within you, ask Me for graces. *Me you have not always*—(Jo. xii. 8). I have come down from Heaven on purpose to dispense them to you; ask whatever you wish, and you shall obtain it. Oh ! what great graces are lost by those who spend but little time in prayer after Communion !

Let us also turn to the Eternal Father, and, bearing in mind the promise of Jesus Christ—*Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you*—(Jo. xvi. 23)—let us say to Him : O my God, for the love of this Thy Son, Whom I have within my heart, give me Thy love; make me all Thine. He who acts thus may become a Saint by a single Communion.

Spiritual Reading

I.—HUMAN RESPECT.

Oh, how many souls has not human respect—that great enemy of our salvation—sent to hell ! We cannot avoid seeing bad example and scandal unless, as St. Paul says, we *go out of this world*—(1 Cor. v. 10). But it is in our power to avoid familiarity with those who give scandal and bad example. Hence the Apostle adds : *But now I have written to you not to keep company . . . with such an one, not so much as to eat*—(1 Cor. v. 11). We should be beware of contracting intimacy with such sinners; for, should we be united with them in the bonds of friendship, we shall feel an unwillingness to oppose

their bad practices and evil counsels. Thus through human respect and the fear of contradicting them, we shall imitate their example, and lose the friendship of God.

Such lovers of the world not only glory in their own iniquities—*They rejoice in most wicked things*—(Prov. ii. 14)—but what is worse, they wish to have companions in wickedness, and ridicule all who endeavour to live like true Christians and to avoid the danger of offending God. This is very displeasing to God, and a sin He forbids in a particular manner: *Despise not a man that turneth away from sin, nor reproach him therewith*—(Ecclus. viii. 6). Despise not those who keep at a distance from sin, and seek not to draw them to evil by your reproaches and your irregularities. The Lord declares that, for those who throw ridicule on virtuous people, chastisements are prepared in this and in the next life. *Judgments are prepared for scorners, and striking hammers for the bodies of fools*—(Prov. xix. 29). They mock the servants of God, and He shall mock them in eternity. *But the Lord shall laugh them to scorn. And they shall fall after this without honour, and be a reproach among the dead forever*—(Wis. iv. 18, 19). They endeavour to make the Saints contemptible in the eyes of the world, and God shall make themselves die unhonoured, and send them to hell to suffer eternal ignominy among the damned.

Not only to offend God, but even to endeavour to make others offend Him, is truly an enormous excess of wickedness. This execrable intention arises from a conviction that there are many weak and pusillanimous souls who, to escape derision and contempt, abandon the practice of virtue and give themselves up to a life of sin. After his conversion to God, St. Augustine wept for having associated with those agents of Lucifer, and confessed that formerly he felt ashamed not to be as wicked and as shameless as they were. How many, to avoid the scoffs of wicked friends, have been induced to imitate their wickedness. "Behold the Saint!" these impious scoffers will say; "get me a piece of his gar-

ment, I will preserve it as a relic. Why does he not become a monk?" How many also, when they receive an insult, resolve to take revenge, not so much through passion as to escape the reputation of being cowards! How many there are who, after having inadvertently give expression to a scandalous maxim, neglect to retract it (as they are bound to do), through fear of losing the esteem of others! How many, because they are afraid of forfeiting the favour of a friend, sell their souls to the devil! They imitate the conduct of Pilate, who, for fear of losing the friendship of Caesar, condemned Jesus Christ to death.

Brethren, if we wish to save our souls, we must overcome human respect and bear the little confusion which may arise from the scoffs of the enemies of the Cross of Jesus Christ. *For there is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace* —(Ecclus. iv. 25). If we do not suffer this confusion with patience, it will lead us into the pit of sin; but if we submit to it for God's sake, it will obtain for us Divine grace here, and great glory hereafter. "As bashfulness is praiseworthy in evil," says St. Gregory, "so it is reprehensible in good."

Some one will say: I wish to save my soul; why, then, should I be persecuted? But there is no remedy; it is impossible to serve God and not be persecuted. *The wicked loathe them that are in the right way* —(Prov. xxix. 27). Sinners cannot bear the sight of the man who lives according to the Gospel, because his life is a continual censure of their own disorderly conduct; and therefore they say: *Let us therefore lie in wait for the just; because he is not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings, and upbraideth us with transgressions of the law*—(Wis. ii. 12). The proud man, who seeks revenge for every insult which he receives, would wish that all should avenge the offences that may be offered them. The avaricious, who grow rich by injustice, wish that all should imitate their fraudulent practices. The drunkard wishes to see others indulge like himself. The immoral, who boast of their

impurities, and can scarcely utter a word which does not savour of obscenity, desire that all should act and speak as they do; and those who do not imitate their conduct, they regard as mean, clownish, and intractable —as men without honour and education. *They are of the world, therefore of the world they speak*—(1 Jo. iv. 5). Worldlings can speak no other language than that of the world. Oh, how great is their poverty and blindness! It has blinded them, and therefore they speak so profanely. *These things they thought, and were deceived; for their own malice blinded them* —(Wis. ii. 21).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

And therefore he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of his death . . . they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance —(Heb. ix. 15). Here St. Paul speaks of the New Testament not as a covenant, but as a promise, or testamentary disposition, by which Jesus Christ left us heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. And because a testament is not in force until the death of the testator, therefore it was necessary that Jesus Christ should die that we might become His heirs, and enter into the possession of Paradise. Wherefore the Apostle adds: *For where there is a testament the death of the testator must of necessity come in. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is as yet of no strength whilst the testator liveth*—(Heb. ix. 16-17). Through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Mediator, we have received grace in Baptism to become the sons of God; unlike the Jews, who, under the old covenant, though

they were the elect, were yet all servants. Whence the Apostle writes: *For there are two covenants, the one from Mount Sina engendering unto bondage*—(Gal. iv. 24). The first mediation was made with God by Moses on Mount Sina, when God, through Moses, promised to the Jews the abundance of temporal blessings if they observed the laws which He gave them; but this mediation, says St. Paul, only produced servants, unlike the mediation of Jesus Christ, which produces sons: *We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise*—(Gal. iv. 28). If, then, being Christians, we are the sons of God, by consequence, says the Apostle, we are also heirs; for a portion of the father's inheritance is given to all sons, and this is the inheritance of eternal glory in Paradise, which Jesus Christ has merited for us by His death.

II.

St. Paul writes: *If we suffer with him that we may be also glorified with him*—(Rom. viii. 17). It is true that, by our sonship to God, which Jesus Christ has obtained for us by His death, we have acquired a right to Paradise; but this is on the supposition that we are faithful to correspond to the Divine grace by our good works, and especially by holy patience. Hence the Apostle says that in order to obtain eternal glory, as Jesus Christ has obtained it, we must suffer upon earth as Jesus Christ suffered. He goes before, as our Captain, with His Cross; under this standard we must follow Him, each bearing his own cross, as the same Lord admonishes us: *He that will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me*—(Matt. xvi. 24).

St. Paul also exhorts us to suffer with courage, strengthened by the hope of Paradise, reminding us that the glory which will be given to us in the next life will be infinitely greater than all our sufferings, that is, if we suffer here with good will in order to fulfil the Divine pleasure: *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to*

come that shall be revealed in us—(Rom. viii. 18). What beggar would be so foolish as not to give gladly all his rags for a great kingdom? We do not as yet enjoy this glory, because we are not yet saved, not having finished our life in the grace of God; but hope in the merits of Jesus Christ, says St. Paul, will save us: *We are saved by hope*—(Rom. viii. 24). He will not fail to give us every help to save us, if we are faithful to Him, and continue to pray; and the promise of Jesus Christ assures us that He hears every one who prays: *Every one that seeketh, receiveth*—(Luke xi. 10). Some one will say: I fear, not that God will refuse to hear me, if I pray to Him, but I fear for myself, that I should not know how to pray as I ought. No, says St. Paul, fear not this, for when we pray, God Himself aids our weakness, and makes us pray so as to be heard. *The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity . . . and asketh for us* —(Rom. viii. 26). He asks, explains St. Augustine, that is, He helps us to ask.

Tuesday—Sixteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"*THE CHARITY OF CHRIST.*"

On the night our Redeemer took leave of His disciples to go to His death, as they were weeping for grief at the coming separation from their beloved Master, Jesus comforted them, saying what He now says to us: "My children, I am going to die for you to show you the love I bear you, but even in death I will not leave you alone.

As long as you remain on earth I will remain with you in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. *Come to me . . . and I will refresh you!*

I.

Come to me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you—(Matt. xi. 28). Our loving Saviour, being about to quit this world, after having completed the work of our Redemption by His death, would not leave us alone in this valley of tears. St. Peter of Alcantara says : " No tongue would suffice to describe the greatness of the love which Jesus bears to each soul; this loving Spouse being about to depart from this world, wishing that His absence should not make us forget Him, left us as a memorial the Most Holy Sacrament, in which He Himself remains; not willing that there should be any pledge between us but Himself to keep the memory of Him alive in our hearts." This great proof of the love of Jesus deserves, therefore, great love on our part; and for this reason He has been pleased, in recent times, to institute the festival in honour of His Most Sacred Heart, as He revealed to His holy servant, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, in order that, by our homage and love, we might offer some return for His loving dwelling upon our altars, and might thus, at the same time, atone for the contempt and insults which He has received, and still receives, in this Sacrament of love from heretics and bad Christians.

Jesus has left us Himself in the Most Holy Sacrament : first, that He might be found by all; secondly, that He may give audience to all; thirdly, that He may grant favours to all. And first, He is on so many different altars that He may be found by all who desire to find Him. On the night on which our Redeemer took leave of His disciples to go to His death, as they were weeping in grief, thinking of their separation from their beloved Master, He comforted them by saying what He now says to us : " My children, I am going to die for you, to show you the love I bear you : but even in death I will

not leave you alone; as long as you remain on earth I will remain with you in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. I leave you My Body, My Soul, My Divinity, My whole Self : as long as you remain on earth I will not separate Myself from you." *Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world*—(Matt. xxviii. 20). St. Peter of Alcantara writes that the Spouse would not leave His spouse solitary during His long absence; wherefore He has left us this Sacrament, in which He Himself remains—the best companion He could leave us. The heathens imagined to themselves many gods; but they could not invent a god more loving than our God, or one who remains so near to us and helps us with so much love : *Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions*—(Deut. iv. 7). This pasage the Church applies to our Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament.

Behold, then, Jesus Christ remaining on our altars, as if confined in so many prisons of love! The Priest takes Him from the tabernacle and places Him on the throne, or gives Him in Communion, and when he replaces Him and closes the tabernacle, Jesus is content to remain enclosed there night and day. But why, my dearest Redeemer, dost Thou stay there even at night, when people close the doors and leave Thee alone? It would be enough to be there in the daytime only; but no, He is pleased to remain also the whole night, awaiting the morning, that He may be immediately found by those who seek Him. The spouse in the Canticles went about seeking her Beloved, and asking those she met, *Have you seen him whom my soul loveth?*—(Cant. iii. 3); and not finding Him, she raised her voice, saying, *Show me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where thou liest in the midday*—(Cant. i. 6). The spouse could not find Him then, because the Most Holy Sacrament did not exist; but now if a soul wishes to find Jesus, she need only go to some parish-church or Monastery, and there she will find the Beloved One awaiting her. There is no village however poor, no

Monastery of Religious, that has not the Blessed Sacrament; and in all these places the King of Heaven is content to dwell, enclosed in a case of wood or of stone, often quite alone, with hardly a lamp, and with no one to stand before Him. "O Lord," exclaims St. Bernard, "this does not become Thy majesty." "It matters not," replies Jesus; "if this be not befitting My majesty it befits my love."

I love Thee, O Jesus, my Supreme Good, Who above all other goods dost deserve our love. Grant that I may forget myself and all things to remember only Thy love, and to spend whatever life may remain to me solely in pleasing Thee. Grant that from this day forward I may find no greater delight than in remaining at Thy feet; there may I burn with love of Thee! Mary, my Mother, obtain for me a great love towards the Most Holy Sacrament; and if thou seest me negligent, remind me, I beseech thee, of the promise I now make of visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every day.

II.

What tender love do pilgrims feel in visiting the holy church of Loretto, or the Holy Places in the Holy Land —the Stable of Bethlehem, Calvary, the Holy Sepulchre, —where Jesus Christ was born, or lived, or died, or was buried! But how much more tender should our love be when we are in a church, in the presence of Jesus Himself, Who remains in the Most Holy Sacrament. The Blessed John Avila used to say that he could find no more devout or consoling sanctuary than a church in which Jesus is veiled in His Sacrament; and Father Balthazar Alvarez used to weep at seeing the palaces of princes full of people, and the churches, in which Jesus dwells, so empty and deserted. O God, if our Lord had left Himself to us in only one church in the world—in that of St. Peter's at Rome, for example—and there on only one day of the year, how many pilgrims, how many nobles and monarchs would make every effort to have the happiness of being there on that day, to pay their court to the King of Heaven come back to earth! What

a splendid tabernacle of gold and gems would be there prepared for Him! With what illuminations would that visit of Jesus Christ be celebrated on that day! "But no," our dear Redeemer says, "I will not remain only in one Church, nor on one single day; nor will I require such riches, or such brilliant displays. I will be present continually every day, and in all places, wherever My faithful are to be found, that they may come to Me without difficulty and at any hour they wish."

If Jesus Christ had not Himself thought of this refinement of love, who could ever have thought of it? If when He was going up to Heaven some one had said to Him: "Lord, if Thou wilt show Thy love to us, remain on our altars, under the species of bread, that we may there find Thee whenever we choose," how daring would this request have seemed! But what no man could ever have thought of our Lord has both thought of and done. But alas, where is our gratitude for such favours? If a prince were to come from a distance to a country-place, that he might be visited by a peasant, how ungrateful would that peasant be if he would not go to him or went only for a passing visit!

O Jesus, my Redeemer, Beloved of my soul, how much it has cost Thee to remain with us in this Sacrament! Thou hadst first to suffer death, that Thou mightest remain on our altars; and then Thou hast had to suffer so many insults in this Sacrament, that Thou mightest help us by Thy presence. Yet how indolent, how negligent, we are in coming to visit Thee, though we know how much our visits please Thee, because Thou delightest to see us in Thy presence, that Thou mayest load us with gifts! Lord, forgive me, for I have been among these ungrateful ones. Henceforward, my Jesus, I will often visit Thee, and stay as long as I can in Thy presence, thanking Thee, and loving Thee, and seeking graces from Thee; since for this very purpose Thou dost remain hidden in our Tabernacles, and become our Prisoner of love. I love Thee, Infinite Goodness; I love Thee, O God of infinite love.

Spiritual Reading

II.—HUMAN RESPECT.

Yes, it is impossible to serve God and escape persecution of some kind. And I say again there is no remedy. All, as St. Paul says, who wish to live united with Jesus Christ must be persecuted by the world. *And all that will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution*—(2 Tim. iii. 12). All the Saints have been persecuted. You say: I do not injure anyone; why, then, am I not left in peace? Well, what evil have the Saints and the Martyrs done? They were full of charity; they loved all, and laboured to do good to all; and how were they treated by the world? They were flayed alive; tortured with red-hot plates of iron; and put to death in the most cruel manner. And whom did Jesus Christ—the Saint of Saints—injure? He consoled all: He healed all. *Virtue went out from him, and healed all*—(Luke vi. 19). And how did the world treat Him? It persecuted Him, so as to make Him die through pain on an infamous gibbet.

This happens because the maxims of the world are diametrically opposed to the maxims of Jesus Christ. What the world esteems, Jesus Christ regards as folly. *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*—(1 Cor. iii. 19). And what is folly in the eyes of the world—that is, crosses, sickness, contempt, and ignominy—Jesus Christ holds in great estimation. *For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness*—(1 Cor. i. 18). How can a man think himself to be a Christian, asks St. Cyprian, when he is afraid to be a Christian? If we are Christians, let us show that we are Christians in name and in truth; for, if we are ashamed of Jesus Christ, He will be ashamed of us, and cannot give us a place on His right hand on the Last Day. *For he that shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed when*

he shall come in his majesty—(Luke ix. 26). On the Day of Judgment God will say : You have been ashamed of Me on earth : I am now ashamed to see you with Me in Paradise. Depart, accursed souls; go into hell to meet your companions who have been ashamed of Me. But mark the words : *he that shall be ashamed of me and of my words.* St. Augustine says that some are ashamed to deny Jesus Christ, but do not blush to deny the *maxims* of Jesus Christ. But you may tell me that if you say you cannot do such an act, because it is contrary to the Gospel, your friends will turn you into ridicule and will call you a hypocrite. Then, says St. John Chrysostom, you will not suffer to be treated with derision by a companion, and you are not unwilling to be hated by God!

The Apostle, who gloried in being a follower of Christ, said : *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world* —(Gal. vi. 14). As I am a person crucified to the world —an object of its scoffs and ill-treatment—so the world is to me an object of contempt and abomination. It is necessary to be convinced that if we do not trample on the world, the world will trample on our souls. But what is the world and all its goods? *All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*—(1 Jo. ii. 16). To what are all the goods of this earth reduced? To riches, which are but dung; to honours, which are only smoke; and to carnal pleasures. But what shall all these profit us if we lose our souls? *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?*—(Matt. xvi. 26).

He that loves God and wishes to save his soul must despise the world and all human respect; and to do this every one must offer violence to himself. St. Mary Magdalen had to do great violence to herself in order to overcome human respect and the comments and scoffs of the world, when, in the presence of so many, she cast herself at the feet of Jesus Christ to wash them with her tears. But she thus became a Saint, and merited from Jesus Christ pardon of her sins, and praise

for her great love. *Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much*—(Luke vii. 47). One day, as St. Francis Borgia carried to certain prisoners a vessel of broth under his cloak, he met his son mounted on a fine horse, and accompanied by noblemen. The Saint felt ashamed to show what he carried under his cloak. But in order to conquer human respect he took the vessel of broth and carried it on his head, and thus showed his contempt for the world. Jesus Christ, our Head and Master, when nailed to the Cross, was mocked by the soldiers : *If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.* He was mocked by the Jewish priests, saying : *He saved others; himself he cannot save* —(Matt. xxvii. 40-42). But He remained on the Cross, and cheerfully died upon it, and thus conquered the world.

" I give thanks to God," says St. Jerome, " that I am worthy to be hated by the world." The Saint returns thanks to God for having made him worthy of the hatred of the world. Jesus Christ pronounced His disciples blessed when they should be hated by men : *Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you*—(Luke vi. 22). Christians, let us rejoice ; for if worldlings curse and upbraid us God praises and blesses us. *They will curse, and thou wilt bless*—(Ps. cviii. 28). Is it not enough for us to be praised by God, to be praised by the Queen of Heaven, by all the Angels, by all the Saints, and by all just men? Let worldlings say what they wish ; but let us continue to please God Who will give us in the next life a reward proportioned to the violence we shall have done to ourselves in despising the contradictions of men. Each should try to consider that there is no one in the world but himself and God. When the wicked treat us with contempt, let us recommend to God these blind and miserable men who run the road to perdition ; and let us thank the Lord for giving to us the light which He refuses to them. Let us continue on our own way. To obtain all it is necessary to conquer all.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The Apostle wishes to increase our confidence when he says : *We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good*—(Rom. viii. 28). By this he teaches us that shame, sickness, poverty, persecutions, are not evils, as men of the world account them; for God turns them all into blessings and glory for those who suffer with patience. Finally, he says : *For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son*—(Rom. viii. 29). With these words he would persuade us that, if we would be saved, we must resolve to suffer everything rather than lose Divine grace, for no one can be admitted to the glory of the Blessed, unless at the Day of Judgment his life be found conformed to the life of Jesus Christ.

O my God, it is true that in my ingratitude I have had the heart to cause Thee so much displeasure and sorrow! But what is past is past! At least for the rest of my life, O my Lord, I will love Thee with all my power; I will live only for Thee; I will be wholly Thine; wholly, wholly, wholly Thine. But Thou must accomplish this. Detach me from every earthly thing, and give me light and strength to seek Thee alone, my only Good, my Love, my All.

O Mary, hope of sinners, thou must help me with thy prayers. Pray, pray for me, and cease not to pray, until thou seest me belonging wholly to God.

II.

That sinners may not abandon themselves to despair on account of their guilt, St. Paul encourages them to

hope for pardon, telling them that for this end the Eternal Father has not spared His own Son, Who was offered to satisfy for our sins, but gave Him up to death, that He might pardon us sinners; and still further to increase the hope of penitent sinners, he says: *Who is he that shall condemn? Jesus Christ that died?*—(Rom. viii. 34), as though he had said: Sinners, you who detest your sins, why do you fear to be condemned to hell? Tell me who is your Judge?—who is to condemn you? Is it not Jesus Christ? How, then, can you fear that you will be condemned to death by this loving Redeemer Who, that He might not condemn you, has been willing to condemn Himself to die as a malefactor upon the infamous gibbet of the Cross? He speaks, indeed of those sinners who, being contrite, have washed their souls in the Blood of the Lamb, according to the words of St. John: *These are they who . . . have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb*—(Apoc. vii. 14).

O my Jesus, if I look at my sins I am ashamed to ask for Paradise, after the many times that I have openly renounced Thee, for the sake of short and miserable pleasures; but looking to Thee upon this Cross, I cannot cease to hope for Paradise, knowing that Thou hast been willing to die upon this tree to atone for my sins, and to obtain for me the Paradise I had despised. O my sweet Redeemer, I hope, through the merits of Thy death, that Thou hast already pardoned me the sins I have committed against Thee, for which I repent, and now I would rather die of grief for them.

Wednesday—Sixteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

I.—THE MERCY OF GOD.

As God is by nature infinite Goodness, He has a sovereign desire to communicate His happiness to us, and therefore His inclination is not to punish but to show mercy. And when He does punish it is in love, that we may be delivered from eternal punishment.

1.

Mercy exalteth itself above judgment—(James ii. 13). Goodness is by nature diffusive—that is, inclined to communicate itself to others. Now God, Who by nature is infinite Goodness, has a sovereign desire to communicate His happiness to us; and therefore His inclination is not to punish, but to show mercy to all. Punishment, says Isaias, is a work opposed to the inclination of God: *He shall be angry . . . that he may do his work, his strange work . . . his work is strange to him*—(Is. xxviii. 21). And when the Lord chastises in this life, He chastises that He may show mercy in the next: *Thou hast been angry, and hast had mercy on us*—(Ps. lix. 3). He appears angry in order that we may amend and detest sin: *Thou hast shown thy people hard things; thou hast made us drink the wine of sorrow*—(Ps. lix. 5). And if He punishes, it is in love, that we may be delivered from eternal punishment: *Thou hast given a warning to them that fear thee, that they may flee from before the bow, that thy beloved may be delivered*—(Ps. lix. 6). Who can ever sufficiently admire and

praise the mercy of God towards sinners in waiting for them, in calling them, and in receiving them when they return! And in the first place, oh, how great is the patience of God in waiting for our repentance! My brother, when you offended God He might have struck you dead; but He waited for you, and, instead of chastising you, He conferred benefits on you, He preserved your life, He provided for you. He feigned not to see your sins, in order that you might return to His grace: *Thou overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance*—(Wis. xi. 24). But how is it, O Lord, that Thou canst not endure a single sin, and yet beholdest so many in silence? Thou beholdest the unchaste, the vindictive, the blasphemer, each day increasing their offences against Thee, and Thou dost not punish them! And why so much patience? God waits for the sinner that he may amend: *Therefore the Lord waiteth, that he may have mercy on you*—(Is. xxx. 18); and that He may thus pardon and save him.

Ah, my Lord, I well know that at this moment my portion ought to be in hell: *Hell is my house.* But at this moment, through Thy mercy, I am not in hell, but here at Thy feet; and I feel Thee within me, whispering to me the commandment that I should love Thee: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.* Thou assurest me that Thou wilt pardon me if I repent of my offences against Thee. My God, since Thou desirest to be loved even by me, a wretched rebel against Thy Majesty, I love Thee with my whole heart; and I grieve for having offended Thee above any other evil that could have befallen me. Ah, enlighten me, O Infinite Goodness, and make me perceive the wrong I have done Thee. Never more will I resist Thy calls. Never more will I displease a God Who has so much loved me, and so often and so lovingly pardoned me. Ah, would that I had never offended Thee, O my Jesus!

II.

St. Thomas says that all creatures—fire, earth, air, and water—would, through their natural instinct, punish the sinner to avenge the injuries done to their Creator; but God withholds them in His mercy: "All creation, in its service to Thee the Creator, is enraged against the unjust." But, O Lord, Thou waitest for these impious men that they may enter into themselves; and seest Thou not that they ungratefully make use of Thy mercy only to offend Thee more? *Thou hast been favourable to the nation, O Lord, thou hast been favourable to the nation: art thou glorified?*—(Is. xxvi. 15). And why so much patience? Because God desires not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live: *I desire not the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live*—(Ezech. xxxiii. 11). O patience of God! St. Augustine goes so far as to say that if God were not God He would be unjust in respect of the excessive patience He shows to sinners: "O God, my God, pardon me if I say that, wert Thou not God, Thou wouldst be unjust." It appears an injustice to the Divine honour to wait for those who make use of patience only to become more insolent. "We sin," continues the Saint; "we are attached to sin." Some make peace with sin, and sleep in sin for months and years. "We rejoice in sin" (others go so far as to boast of their wickedness), "and Thou art appeased. We provoke Thee to anger, and Thou invitest us to mercy." It would seem as if we entered into a contest with God: we to provoke Him to chastise us, and He to invite us to pardon.

O my Jesus, pardon me and grant that from this day henceforth I may love Thee alone; that I may live only for Thee Who didst die for me; that I may suffer for Thy love, since Thou hast suffered so much for the love of me. Thou hast loved me from eternity; grant that in eternity I may burn with Thy love. I hope for all, my Saviour, through Thy merits. I confide also in thee, O Mary; it is for thee to save me by thy intercession.

Spiritual Reading

III.—HUMAN RESPECT.

THE MEANS OF OVERCOMING HUMAN RESPECT.

In order to overcome human respect it is necessary to fix in our hearts the holy resolution of preferring the grace of God to all the goods and favours of the world, and to say with St. Paul : *Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God*—(Rom. viii. 38). Jesus Christ exhorts us not to fear those who can take away the life of the body; but to fear Him only Who can condemn the soul and body to hell. *And fear ye not them that kill the body . . . but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell*—(Matt. x. 28). We wish either to follow God or the world; if we wish to follow God we must give up the world. *How long do you halt between two sides?* said Elias to the people. *If the Lord be God, follow him* —(3 Kings xviii. 21). You cannot serve God and the world. He that seeks to please men cannot please God. *If*, says the Apostle, *I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*—(Gal. i. 10).

The true servants of God rejoice at seeing themselves despised and maltreated for the sake of Jesus Christ. The holy Apostles *went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus*—(Acts v. 41). Moses could have prevented the anger of Pharaoh by not contradicting the current report that he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter. But he denied that he was her son, preferring, as St. Paul says, the opprobrium of Christ to all the riches of the world. *Choosing rather to be afflicted with the people of God; . . . esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians*—(Heb. xi. 25-26).

Wicked friends come to you and say : What extravagances are these in which you indulge? Why do you not act like others? Say to them : My conduct is not opposed to that of all men; there are others who lead holy lives. They are indeed few; but I will try and follow their example; for the Gospel says : *Many are called, but few are chosen*—(Matt. xx. 16). "If," says St. John Climacus, "you wish to be saved with the few, live like the few." But, they will say : Do you not see that all murmur against you, and condemn your manner of living? Let your answer be : It is enough for me that God does not censure my conduct. Is it not better to obey God than to obey men? Such was the answer of St. Peter and St. John to the Jewish priests : *If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye*—(Acts iv. 19). If they ask you how can you bear an insult? or if you submit to it how you can appear among your equals? Answer them by saying that you are a Christian, and that it is enough for you to be right in the eyes of God. Such should be your answer to all those satellites of Satan; you must despise all their maxims and reproaches. And when it is necessary to reprove those who make little of God's law, you must take courage and correct them publicly. *Them that sin, reprove before all*—(1 Tim. v. 20). And when there is question of the Divine honour, we should not be frightened by the dignity of the man who offends God; let us say to him openly : That is sinful; it cannot be done. Let us imitate St. John the Baptist who reproved King Herod for living with his brother's wife, and said to him : *It is not lawful for thee to have her* —(Matt. xiv. 4). Men, indeed, will regard us as fools, and turn us into derision; but on the Day of Judgment they will acknowledge that they have been fools, and we shall have the glory of being numbered among the Saints. They shall say : *These are they whom we had sometime in derision . . . We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints*—(Wis. v. 3-5).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Suffering with Patience is a virtue not practised nor even understood by those who love the world. It is understood and practised only by souls who love God. "O Lord," said St. John of the Cross to Jesus Christ, "I ask nothing of Thee but to suffer and to be despised for Thy sake." St. Teresa frequently exclaimed: "O my Jesus, either to suffer or to die." St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi was wont to say: "To suffer and not to die." Thus speak the Saints who love God, because a soul can give no surer mark to God of love than voluntarily to suffer to please Him. This is the great proof which Jesus Christ has given of His love for us. As God He loved us in creating us; in providing us with so many blessings; in calling us to enjoy the same glory that He Himself enjoys; but in nothing else has He more fully shown how much He loves us than in becoming Man, and embracing a painful life, and a death full of pangs and ignominies, for love of us. And how shall we show our love for Jesus Christ? Is it by leading a life full of pleasures and earthly delights?

II.

Let us not think for a moment that God takes delight in our pains. The Lord is not of so cruel a nature as to delight to see us, His creatures, groan and suffer. He is a God of infinite goodness, Who desires to see us fully content and happy, so that He is full of sweetness, affability, and compassion to all who come to Him. But our unhappy condition, as sinners, and the gratitude we owe to the love of Jesus Christ, require that,

for His love, we should renounce the delights of this earth, and embrace with affection the cross He gives us to carry during this life, after Him Who goes before, bearing a Cross far heavier than ours; and all this in order to bring us, after our death, to a blessed life, which will never end. God, then, has no desire to see us suffer, but, being Himself infinite justice, He cannot leave our faults unpunished; so that, in order that they may be punished, and that we may one day attain eternal happiness, He would have us purge away our sins with patience, and thus deserve to be eternally blessed. What can be more beautiful and sweet than this rule of Divine Providence, where we see at once justice satisfied and ourselves saved and happy?

Thursday—Sixteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

II.—THE MERCY OF GOD.

When Adam rebelled against the Lord and hid himself from His grace, behold the Lord goes in search of the lost Adam, and almost weeping calls him: *Adam, where art thou?* Ah, this good Lord goes all day in quest of sinners, saying to them: Ungrateful that you are, do not fly from me! *Why will you die, O house of Israel?*

I.

Consider the mercy of God in calling sinners to repentance. When Adam rebelled against the Lord, and

afterwards hid himself from His face, behold God, having lost Adam, goes in search of him, and, almost weeping, calls him : *Adam, where art thou?*—(Gen. iii. 9). "They are words of a father," observes Father Pereira, "who seeks his lost son." My brother, how often has God done the same for you? You fled from God, and God continued to call you : now by inspirations, now by remorse of conscience, now by sermons, now by tribulations, now by the death of your friends. Jesus Christ appears to say, speaking of you : *I have laboured with crying : my jaws have become hoarse* —(Ps. lxviii. 4). My son, My voice is weary crying after thee. "Remember, O sinners," says St. Teresa, "that the same Lord Who cries to you now will one day be your Judge."

My brother, how many times have you been deaf to the voice of God Who called you! You have deserved that He should call you no more. But no, your God has not ceased to call you, because He desired to make peace with you and to save you. Who was it that called you? A God of infinite majesty. And you, who were you, but a miserable worm? And why did He call you but to restore to you that life of grace you had lost : *Return ye and live*—(Ezech. xviii. 32). To obtain Divine grace it would be but little to live in a desert during a whole life; but God offered to you that you could receive His grace in a moment, if you chose it, by an act of contrition; and you refused it. And after all this God has not abandoned you; He has sought you, as it were, weeping, and saying : "My son, why wilt thou damn thyself?" *Why will you die, O house of Israel?*—(Ezech. xviii. 31).

Behold, O Lord, at Thy feet an ungrateful sinner, imploring Thy pity! My Father, pardon me! I call Thee Father because Thou desirest I should so call Thee. I do not deserve compassion, for after Thou hast been good to me I have been the more ungrateful to Thee. Ah, by that goodness which has withheld Thee, my God, from abandoning me when I fled from Thee, by that same goodness receive me now that I return to

Thee. Give me, my Jesus, a great sorrow for my offences against Thee, and bestow on me the kiss of peace.

II.

When a man commits a mortal sin he drives God from his soul : *The wicked have said to God : Depart from us* —(Job xxi. 14). But what does God do? He stands at the door of the ungrateful heart : *I stand at the door and knock*—(Apoc. iii. 20); and prays, as it were, the soul to admit Him : *Open to me, my sister*—(Cant. v. 2); and He wearies Himself with entreaties : *I am wearied of entreating thee*—(Jer. xv. 6). Yes, says St. Denis the Areopagite, God follows sinners like a despised lover, beseeching them not to lose their souls : "God lovingly follows even those who turn away from Him, and beseeches them not to perish." This precisely was signified by St. Paul when he wrote to his disciples : *For Christ, we beseech you, be reconciled to God*—(2 Cor. v. 20). Commenting upon this passage St. John Chrysostom makes a beautiful reflection : "Christ Himself conjures you. And for what? To reconcile yourselves to God : since it is not He that is the enemy but you." By which the Saint means that, far from striving to move God to make peace with him, the sinner has only to resolve to make peace with God, since he, and not God, flies from peace.

Ah, this good Lord goes all day in quest of sinners, saying to them : "Ungrateful that you are, do not fly any more from Me; tell me why you fly from Me? I love your welfare, and only desire to make you happy; why will you lose your souls?" But, Lord, what art Thou about? Why so much patience and so much love for these rebels? What good canst Thou hope from them? It redounds but little to Thy honour to show such ardent love for miserable worms who leave Thee : *What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? Or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?*—(Job vii. 17).

O Lord, I grieve more for the injuries done to Thee than for any evil whatsoever; I detest them, I abhor them;

and I unite this my abhorrence to that which Thou my Redeemer didst feel for them in the Garden of Gethsemane. Ah, pardon me through the merits of that Blood which Thou didst shed for me in that Garden. I firmly promise that I will never more depart from Thee, and that I will banish from my heart every affection that is not for Thee. My Jesus, my Love, I love Thee above all things; I will always love Thee, and love only Thee; but give me strength to do this; make me wholly Thine. O Mary, my hope, thou art the Mother of mercy; pray to God for me, and have pity on me.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER: I.—ITS NECESSITY.

St. Paul writes: *God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*—(1 Tim. ii. 4). According to St. Peter, He does not wish any one to be lost. *The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance*—(2 Pet. iii. 9). Hence St. Leo teaches that, as God wishes us to observe His commands, so He comes to our assistance, that we may fulfil them. And St. Thomas, in explaining the words of the Apostle: *God, who will have all men to be saved*, says: "Therefore, grace is wanting to no one; but God, on His part, communicates it to all." And in another place the holy Doctor writes: "To provide every man with the means necessary for his salvation, provided on his part he puts no obstacle to it, belongs to Divine Providence."

But, according to Gennadius, God grants the assistance of His grace only to those who pray for it. "We believe . . . that no one works out his salvation but by God's assistance; and that only he who prays merits aid from God." And St. Augustine teaches that,

except the first graces of vocation to the Faith and to repentance, all other graces, and particularly the grace of perseverance, are granted only to those who ask them. "It is evident that God gives some graces, such as the beginning of Faith, without prayer—and that He has prepared other graces, such as perseverance to the end—only for those who pray." And in another place he writes that "God wishes to bestow His favours; but He gives them only to those who ask."

Hence Theologians commonly teach, after St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, and others, that, for adults, prayer is necessary as *a means* of salvation; that is, without prayer *it is impossible for them to be saved.* This doctrine may be inferred from the following passages of Scripture: *We ought always to pray*—(Luke xviii. 1). *Ask, and you shall receive*—(Jo. xvi. 24). *Pray without ceasing*—(1 Thess. v. 17). The words *we ought, ask, pray*, according to St. Thomas, and the generality of Theologians, imply a precept which obliges, under grievous sin, particularly in three cases: (1) When a man is in the state of sin; (2) When he is in danger of falling into sin; and (3) When he is in danger of death. Theologians teach, that he who, at other times neglects prayer for a month, or at most for two months, cannot be excused from mortal sin; because without prayer we cannot procure the helps necessary for the observance of the law of God. St. John Chrysostom teaches that as water is necessary to prevent trees from withering, so prayer is necessary to save us from perishing.

It was a mere groundless assertion of Jansenius that there are some commands, the fulfilment of which is impossible to us, and that we have not even grace to render their observance possible. For, the Council of Trent teaches, in the words of St. Augustine, that though man is not able, with the aid of the grace ordinarily given, to fulfil all the commandments, still he can, by prayer, obtain the additional helps necessary

for their observance. "God does not command impossibilities; but, by His precepts, He admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask what you cannot do; and He assists you that you may be able to do it." To this may be added another celebrated passage of St. Augustine: "By our faith, which teaches that God does not command impossibilities, we are admonished what to do in things that are easy, and what to ask in things that are difficult."

But why does God Who knows our weakness, permit us to be assailed by enemies which we are not able to resist? The Lord, answers the holy Doctor, seeing the great advantages which we derive from the necessity of prayer, permits us to be attacked by enemies more powerful than we are, that we may ask His assistance. Hence they who are conquered cannot excuse themselves by saying that they had not strength to resist the assault of the enemy; for had they asked aid from God, He would have given it; and had they prayed, they would have been victorious. Therefore, if they are defeated, God will punish them. St. Bonaventure says that if a general lose a fortress in consequence of not having sought timely succour from his sovereign, he will be branded as a traitor. Thus God regards as a traitor the Christian who, when he finds himself assailed by temptations, neglects to seek Divine aid. *Ask*, says Jesus Christ, *and you shall receive*. Then, concludes St. Teresa, he that does not ask does not receive. This is conformable to the doctrine of St. James: *You have not, because you do not ask*—(James iv. 2). St. John Chrysostom says that prayer is a powerful weapon of defence against all enemies. "Truly prayer is a strong armour." St. Ephrem writes that he who fortifies himself beforehand by prayer, prevents the entrance of sin into the soul. "If you pray before you work the passage into the soul will not be open to sin." David said the same: *Praising I will call upon the Lord, and I shall be saved from my enemies*—(Ps. xvii. 4).

If we wish to lead a good life, and to save our souls,

we must learn to pray. "He," says St. Augustine, "knows how to live well who knows how to pray well." In order to obtain God's graces by prayer, certain conditions are necessary :

First, *sin must be given up, for God does not hear obstinate sinners.* For example : if a person entertains hatred towards another, and wishes to take revenge, God does not hear his prayer. *I will not hear*, says *God, for your hands are full of blood*—(Is. i. 15). St. John Chrysostom says that he who prays while he cherishes a sinful affection does not pray but mocks God. But if he ask the Lord to take away hatred from his heart, the Lord will hear him.

Secondly, *it is necessary to pray with attention.* Some imagine that they pray by repeating many *Our Fathers* with such distraction that they do not know what they are saying. These speak, but do not pray. Of them the Lord says, by the Prophet Isaias : *With their lips they glorify me, but their hearts are far from me*—(Is. xxix. 13).

Thirdly, *it is necessary to take away the occasions which hinder our prayer.* He who is occupied in a thousand affairs unprofitable to the soul, so places a cloud that his prayer is prevented from passing to the throne of grace. *Thou hast set a cloud before thee, that our prayer may not pass through*—(Lam. iii. 44). Let us not forget the exhortation of St. Bernard to ask graces of God through the intercession of His Divine Mother. "Let us ask grace, and ask through Mary; for she is a Mother, and her prayer cannot be fruitless." St. Anselm says : "Many things are asked of God and are not obtained : what is asked of Mary is obtained, not because she is more powerful, but because God decreed thus to honour her, that men may know that she can obtain all things from God."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

All our hopes, then, we must build upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and from Him we must hope for all aid to live holily, and save ourselves; and we cannot doubt that it is His desire to see us holy: *This is the will of God, your sanctification*—(1 Thess. iv. 3). But true as this is, we must not neglect to do our part to satisfy God for the injuries we have done Him, and to attain by our good works to eternal life. This the Apostle expressed when he said: *I fill up that which is wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh*—(Col. i. 24). Was the Passion of Christ, then, not complete and not enough in itself to save us? It was most complete in its value, and more than sufficient to save all men; nevertheless, in order that the merits of the Passion may be applied to us, says St. Teresa, we must do our part, and suffer with patience the crosses God sends us that we may be like our Head, Jesus Christ, according to what the Apostle writes to the Romans: *Whom he foreknew, them he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren*—(Rom. viii. 29).

II.

Still we must ever remember, as the Angelic Doctor warns us, that all the virtue of our good works, satisfactions, and penances, is communicated to them by the satisfaction of Jesus Christ: "The satisfaction of man has its efficacy from the satisfaction of Christ." And thus we reply to the heretics, who call our pen-

ances injurious to the Passion of Jesus Christ, as if it were not sufficient to satisfy for our sins.

But what we hold and say is, that in order to be partakers in the merits of Jesus Christ, it is necessary that we labour to fulfil the Divine precepts, even by doing violence to ourselves, so that we may not yield to the temptations of hell. And this is what our Lord meant when He said : *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away*—(Matt. xi. 12.) It is necessary, when occasions occur, that we do violence to ourselves by continence, by the mortification of our senses, that we may not be conquered by our enemies. And when we find ourselves guilty before God through the sins we have committed, we must do violence to God with our tears, says St. Ambrose, in order to obtain pardon. And then, to console us, the Saint adds : " O blessed violence which is not punished with the wrath of God, but is welcomed and rewarded with mercy !" The more violent a man is with Christ, the more religious is he accounted by Christ. For we must first rule over ourselves by conquering our passions, that we may one day seize upon Heaven, which our Saviour has merited for us. And therefore we must do violence to ourselves by suffering contradictions and persecutions, and by conquering the temptations and passions which, without violence, are never conquered.

Friday—Sixteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

III.—THE MERCY OF GOD.

The princes of the earth disdain even to look upon those rebel subjects who come to ask their pardon; but God does not so act with us when we return to Him: *Return to me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee* —(Jer. iii. 1).

1.

The princes of the earth disdain even to look upon those rebel subjects who come to ask their pardon; but God does not act thus in our regard: *He will not turn away his face from you if you return to him*—(2 Par. xxx. 9). God cannot turn His face from those who return to cast themselves at His feet: no, for He Himself invites them and promises to receive them as soon as they come: *Return to me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee* –(Jer. iii. 1). *Turn to me, saith the Lord, and I will turn to you*—(Zach. i. 3). Oh, the love and tenderness with which God embraces the sinner who returns to Him! This is precisely what Jesus Christ would have us understand by the Parable of the lost sheep, which, when the shepherd had found, *he laid it on his shoulders rejoicing* –(Luke xv. 5), and called his friends to rejoice with him: *Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost*—(Luke xv. 6). And St. Luke adds: *There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance.* This was more fully explained by the Redeemer in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, saying that He is that Father Who, when

He beholds His lost son returning, runs to meet him, and before he can speak embraces and kisses him; and in embracing him almost swoons away through tenderness for the consolation He experiences: *Returning to him, he fell upon his neck and kissed him*—(Luke xv. 20).

O my Jesus, hear me, and pardon me for the sake of the Blood Thou hast shed for me. We therefore beseech Thee, assist Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood. O Mary, my Mother, look with pity upon me; turn thine eyes of mercy towards us, and draw us entirely to God.

II.

The Lord promises that if sinners repent He will even forget their sins, as if they had never offended Him. *If the wicked do penance . . . living he shall live . . . I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done*—(Ezech. xviii. 21). He even goes so far as to say: *Come and accuse me, saith the Lord; if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow*—(Is. i. 18). As if He said: Sinners, *come and accuse me*! If I do not pardon you, reprove Me, upbraid Me with having been unfaithful to My promises! But no; God knows not how to despise an humble and contrite heart.

The Lord glories in showing mercy and granting pardon to sinners. *And therefore shall he be exalted sparing you*—(Is. xxx. 18). And how long does He defer this granting pardon? Not an instant: He grants it immediately. *Weeping*, says the Prophet Isaias, *thou shalt not weep; he will surely have pity on thee*—(Is. xxx. 19). Sinners, exclaims the Prophet, you have not long to weep; at the first tear the Lord will be moved to pity: *At the voice of thy cry, as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee*—(Is. xxx. 19). God does not treat us as we treat Him. We are deaf to the calls of God, but *as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee.* The very instant you repent and ask forgiveness, God answers and grants your pardon.

O my God, against whom have I rebelled? Against Thee, Who art so good, against Thee Who hast created me, and died for me. After so many acts of treason Thou hast borne with me. Ah! the thought of the patience Thou hast had with me ought to make me live always on fire with Thy love. And who would have borne so long as Thou hast the injuries which I have done Thee? Miserable, indeed, shall I be, if I ever again offend Thee, and condemn myself to hell! I already see that Thy mercy can bear with me no longer. I am sorry, O Sovereign Good, for having offended Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart: I am resolved to give Thee all the remainder of my life. Hear me, O Eternal Father, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and give me holy perseverance and Thy love.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER: II.—ITS EFFICACY AND VALUE.

To understand the efficacy and value of Prayer, we need only consider the great promises God has made to everyone who prays. *Call upon me, . . . I will deliver thee*—(Ps. xlix. 15). Call upon Me, and I will save you from every danger. *He shall cry to me, I will hear him*—(Jer. xxxiii. 3). *Cry to me, and I will hear thee. You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you*—(Jo. xv. 7). Ask whatsoever you wish and it shall be given to you. There are a thousand similar passages in the Old and New Testaments. By His nature God is, as St. Leo says, Goodness itself. Hence He desires, with a great desire, to make us partakers of His own good. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that when any one prays to God for any grace, God feels in a certain manner under an obligation to him, and thanks him; because by prayer

the soul opens to Him a way of satisfying His desire to dispense His graces to us. Hence, in the Holy Scriptures, the Lord appears to recommend and inculcate nothing more forcibly than to ask and pray. To show this, the words which we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew are sufficient. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you*—(Matt. vii. 7). St. Augustine teaches that by these promises God has bound Himself to grant all we ask in prayer. "By His promises God has made Himself a debtor." And the Saint says that if the Lord did not wish to bestow His graces upon us He would not exhort us so strenuously to ask them. "He would not exhort us to ask unless He wished to give." Hence we see that the Psalms of David and the Books of Solomon and of the Prophets are full of prayers.

Theodoret has written that prayer is so efficacious before God that, "though it be one, it can do all things." St. Bernard teaches that when we pray, the Lord, if He does not give us the grace we ask, will grant a more useful gift. "He will give either what we ask, or what He knows to be more profitable to us." And whom has God ever despised by not listening to his petition? *Who hath called upon him, and he despised him?*—(Ecclus. ii. 12). The Scripture says that among the Gentile nations there is none that has its gods so willing to hear their prayers as our true God is to hear ours. *Neither is there any other nation so great that hath gods so nigh to them as our God is present to all our petitions*—(Deut. iv. 7).

The princes of the earth, says St. John Chrysostom, give few audiences; but God grants audience to every one that wishes for it. David tells us that this goodness of God in hearing us at whatever time we pray to Him, shows us that He is our true God, Whose love for us surpasses the love of all others. *In what day soever I shall call upon thee, behold I know thou art my God*—(Ps. lv. 10). He wishes and ardently desires to confer favours upon us; but He requires us to pray

for them. Jesus Christ said one day to His disciples: *Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name; ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full*—(Jo. xvi. 24). As if He said: You complain of Me for not making you perfectly content; but you ought to complain of yourselves for not having asked of Me all the gifts you stood in need of; ask, henceforth, whatsoever you want, and your prayer shall be heard. Many, says St. Bernard, complain that the Lord is wanting to them. But God complains with more justice that they are wanting to Him, by neglecting to ask Him for His graces.

The ancient Fathers, after having consulted together about the exercise most conducive to salvation, came to the conclusion that the best means of securing eternal life is to pray continually, saying: Lord, assist me; Lord, hasten to my assistance. "Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord, make haste to help me." Hence the Holy Church commands these two petitions to be often repeated in the Canonical Hours by all the Clergy and by all Religious, who pray not only for themselves, but also for the whole Christian world. St. John Climacus says that our prayers as it were compel God by a holy violence to hear us. "Prayer does pious violence to God." Hence, when we pray to the Lord, He instantly answers by bestowing upon us the grace we ask. *At the voice of thy cry, as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee*—(Is. xxx. 19). Hence St. Ambrose says that "he who asks of God receives while he asks." And He not only grants His graces instantly, but also abundantly, giving us more than we pray for. St. Paul tells us that God is rich—that is, liberal of His graces to every one that prays to Him. *Rich unto all that call upon him*—(Rom. x. 12). And St. James says: *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not*—(James i. 5). *He upbraideth not.* When we pray to God, He does not reproach us with our sins, but seems to forget all the insults we have offered Him, and to delight in enriching us with His graces.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

God teaches us that in order not to lose our souls we must be prepared to suffer the agonies of death, and to die; but, at the same time, He says that for him who is thus prepared He Himself will fight, and will destroy his enemies. St. John saw before the throne of God a great multitude of Saints clothed in white garments (because into Heaven nothing defiled can enter), and he beheld that every one of them bore in his hand a palm branch, the token of Martyrdom. Are all the Saints, then, Martyrs? Yes, all grown up persons who are saved must either be Martyrs in blood, or Martyrs in patience, in conquering the assaults of hell and the inordinate desires of the flesh. Bodily pleasures send innumerable souls to hell, and, therefore, we must resolve with courage to despise them. Let us be assured that either the soul must tread the body under foot, or the body trample on the soul.

II.

We must, then, I repeat, do ourselves violence in order to be saved. But this violence is such (it will be said by some one) that I cannot do it of myself, if God does not give it me through His grace. To such a one St. Ambrose says: "If you look to yourself, you can do nothing; but if you trust in God, strength will be given you." But, in doing this, we must suffer, and it is impossible to avoid it. If we would enter into the glory of the Blessed, says the Scripture, we must suffer much tribulation. Thus St. John, beholding the glory of the Saints in Heaven, heard a voice saying: *These*

are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their garments, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is true that they all attained Heaven by being washed in the Blood of the Lamb, but they all went there after suffering great tribulation.

Saturday—Sixteenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S LOVE OF GOD.

Our Lady revealed to St. Bridget that in this world she never had a thought, a desire, or a joy but in God and for God. Mary did not so much repeat acts of the love of God like other Saints : her whole life was one continued act of Divine charity.

I.

Our Lady revealed to St. Bridget that in this world she never had a thought, a desire, or a joy, but in and for God : " I thought," she said, " of nothing but God, nothing pleased me but God " ; so that her blessed soul, being in the almost continual contemplation of God whilst on earth, the acts of love which she formed were innumerable, as Father Suarez writes : " The acts of perfect charity formed by the Blessed Virgin in this life were without number; for nearly the whole of her life was spent in contemplation, and in that state she constantly repeated acts of love." But a remark of Bernardine de Bustis pleases me still more. He says that

Mary did not so much repeat acts of love as other Saints do, but that her whole life was one continued act of love; for, by a special privilege, she always actually loved God. As a royal eagle, she always kept her eyes fixed on the Divine Sun of Justice: "so that," as St. Peter Damian says, "the duties of active life did not prevent her from loving, and love did not prevent her from attending to those duties." Therefore St. Germanus says that the Altar of Propitiation, on which the fire was never extinguished day or night, was a type of Mary.

Nor was sleep an obstacle to Mary's love for God; since, as St. Augustine asserts, "the dreams, when sleeping, of our first parents, in their state of innocence, were as happy as their lives when waking"; and if such a privilege was granted them, it certainly cannot be denied that it was also granted to the Divine Mother, as Suarez, the Abbot Rupert, and St. Bernardine fully admit. St. Ambrose is also of this opinion; for speaking of Mary, he says: "while her body rested, her soul watched," verifying in herself the words of the Wise Man: *Her lamp shall not be put out in the night* —(Prov. xxxi. 18). Yes, for while her blessed body took its necessary repose in gentle sleep, "her soul," says St. Bernardine, "freely tended towards God; so much so that she was then wrapped in more perfect contemplation than any other person ever was when awake." Therefore could she well say with the Spouse in the Canticles: *I sleep, and my heart watcheth* —(Cant. v. 2). "As happy in sleep as when awake," as Suarez says. In fine, St. Bernardine asserts that as long as Mary lived in this world she was continually loving God: "The mind of the Blessed Virgin was always wrapped in the ardour of love." The Saint, moreover, adds that "she never did anything that the Divine Wisdom did not show her to be pleasing to Him; and that she loved God as much as she thought He was to be loved by her."

Indeed, according to Blessed Albert the Great, we can well say that Mary was filled with so great charity

that greater was not possible in any pure creature on earth. Hence St. Thomas of Villanova affirms that by her ardent charity the Blessed Virgin became so beautiful and so enamoured of her God that, captivated as it were by her love, He descended into her womb and became Man. Wherefore St. Bernardine exclaims: "Behold the power of the Virgin Mother: she wounded and took captive the Heart of God."

II.

As Mary herself loved God so much there can be nothing she requires more of her clients than that they also should love Him to their utmost. This precisely she one day told Blessed Angela of Foligno after Communion, saying: "Angela, be thou blessed by my Son, and endeavour to love Him as much as thou canst." She also said to St. Bridget: "Daughter, if thou desirest to bind me to thee, love my Son." Mary desires nothing more than to see her Beloved, Who is God, loved. Novarinus asks why the Blessed Virgin, with the spouse in the Canticles, begged the Angels to make the great love she bore Him known to our Lord, saying: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love*—(Cant. v. 8). Did not God know how much she loved Him? Why did she seek to show the wound to her Beloved, since He it was Who had inflicted it?" The same author answers that the Divine Mother thereby wished to make her love known to us, not to God; that as she was herself wounded, so might she also be enabled to wound us with Divine love. And "because Mary was all on fire with the love of God, all who love and approach her are inflamed by her with this same love; for she renders them like unto herself." For this reason St. Catharine of Sienna called Mary "the bearer of fire," the bearer of the flames of Divine love. If we also desire to burn with these blessed flames, let us endeavour always to draw nearer to our Mother by our prayers and the affections of our souls.

Ah, Mary, thou Queen of love, of all creatures the most amiable, the most beloved, and the most loving, as St. Francis de Sales called thee,—my own sweet Mother, thou wast always and in all things inflamed with love towards God; deign, then, to bestow at least a spark of it on me. Thou didst pray thy Son for the spouses whose wine had failed: *They have no wine* —(Jo. ii. 3). And wilt thou not pray for us, in whom the love of God, Whom we are under such obligations to love, is wanting? Say also: *They have no love*, and obtain us this love. This is the only grace for which we ask. O Mother, by the love thou bearest to Jesus, graciously hear us and pray for us. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

NOVENAS IN HONOUR OF OUR BLESSED LADY.

The devout clients of Mary are all care and fervour in celebrating Novenas or Nine Days' Prayer preceding her Festivals; and the Blessed Virgin is all love, in dispensing innumerable and most special graces to them. St. Gertrude one day saw under Mary's mantle a band of souls whom the great Lady was considering with the most tender affection; and she was given to understand that they were persons who, during the preceding days, had prepared themselves by various devotions for the Feast of the Assumption. The following devotions are some of those which may be used during the novenas:

1.—We may make mental prayer in the morning and evening, and a Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, adding nine times the "Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father."

2.—We may pay Mary three visits (visiting her statue or picture), and thank our Lord for the graces

He granted His Blessed Mother, and each time ask the Blessed Virgin for some special grace.

3.—We may make many acts of love towards Mary (at least fifty or a hundred), and also towards Jesus; for we can do nothing that pleases her more than to love her Son, as she said to St. Bridget: "If thou wishest to bind thyself to me, love my Son."

4.—We may read every day of the Novena, for a quarter of an hour, some book that treats of her glories.

5.—We may perform some external mortification, such as a fast, abstaining from fruit or some favourite dish, or at least a part of it, or chew some bitter herbs. On the Vigil of the Feast we may fast on bread and water: but none of these things should be done without the permission of one's confessor. Interior mortifications, however, are the best of all to practise during these Novenas, such as to avoid looking at or listening to things out of curiosity; to remain in retirement; observe silence; be obedient; not to give impatient answers; to bear contradictions, and such things; which can all be practised with less danger of vanity, with greater merit, and which do not need the confessor's permission. The most useful exercise is to propose, from the beginning of the Novena, to correct some fault into which we fall the most frequently. For this purpose it will be well, in the visits spoken of above, to ask pardon for past faults, to renew our resolutions not to commit them any more, and to implore Mary's help. The devotion most dear and pleasing to Mary is to endeavour to imitate her virtues; therefore it would be well always to propose to ourselves the imitation of some virtue that corresponds to the Festival; as, for example—for the Feast of her Immaculate Conception, purity of intention; for her Nativity, renewal of fervour to throw off tepidity; for her Presentation, detachment from something to which we are most attached; for her Annunciation, humility in supporting contempt; for her Visitation, charity towards our neighbour, giving alms, or at least praying for sinners; for her Purification, obedience to Superiors; and finally,

for the Feast of her Assumption, let us endeavour to detach ourselves from the world, do all to prepare ourselves for death, and regulate each day of our lives as if it was to be our last.

6.—Besides going to Communion on the day of the Feast, it would be well to ask leave from our confessor to go more frequently during the Novena. Father Segneri used to say that we cannot honour Mary better than with Jesus. She herself revealed to a holy soul (as Father Crasset relates), that we can offer her nothing that is more pleasing to her than Holy Communion. For in that Sacrament it is that Jesus gathers the fruit of His Passion in our soul. Hence it appears that the Blessed Virgin desires nothing so much of her clients as Communion, saying : *Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you*—(Prov. ix. 5).

7.—Finally, on the day of the Feast, after Holy Communion, we must offer ourselves to the service of this Divine Mother, and ask of her the grace to practise the virtue we had proposed to ourselves during the Novena. It is well every year to choose, amongst the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin one for which we have the greatest and most tender devotion; and for this one to make a very special preparation by dedicating ourselves anew, and in a more particular manner, to her service, choosing her for our Sovereign Lady, Advocate, and Mother. Then we must ask her pardon for all our negligence in her service during the past year, and promise greater fidelity for the next; and conclude by begging her to accept us for her servants, and to obtain us a holy death.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Be assured, St. Paul wrote to his disciples, that God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able. God has promised to give us sufficient help to conquer every temptation, if only we ask Him. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find*—(Matt. vii. 7). He cannot, therefore, fail of His promise. It is a fatal error of the heretics to say that God commands things which it is impossible for us to observe. The Council of Trent teaches : *God does not command impossible things; but when he commands, he bids us do what we can, and seek help for what we cannot do, and he will help us that we may be able.* St. Ephrem writes : " If men do not put upon their beasts a greater burden than they can bear, much less does God lay greater trials upon men than they can endure."

Thomas à Kempis writes : " The cross everywhere awaits thee; it is needful for thee everywhere to preserve patience, if thou wouldst have peace. If thou willingly bearest the Cross, it will bear thee to thy desired end." In this world we all of us go about seeking peace, and would find it without suffering; but this is not possible in our present state; we must suffer; the cross awaits us wherever we turn.

II.

How, then, can we find peace in the midst of these crosses? By patience, by embracing the cross which presents itself to us. St. Teresa says that " he who drags the cross along feels its weight, however small it

is; but he who willingly embraces it and carries it, however great it is, does not feel it."

The same Thomas à Kempis says: "Which of the Saints is without a cross? The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom, and dost thou seek for pleasure?" Jesus, so innocent, so holy, and the Son of God, was willing to suffer through His whole life, and shall we go in search of pleasures and comforts? To give us an example of patience He chose a life full of ignominies and pains within and without; and shall we wish to be saved without suffering, or shall we suffer without patience, which is a double suffering, and without fruit, which only increases our pain? How can we pretend to be lovers of Jesus Christ if we will not suffer for love of Him Who has suffered so much for love of us? How can he glory in being a follower of the Crucified who refuses or receives with ill-will the fruits of the cross, which are sufferings, contempt, poverty, pains, infirmities, and all things contrary to our self-love?

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE FOLLY OF POOR SINNERS.

The Blessed John of Avila would have wished to divide the world into two great prisons—one for those who do not believe and the other for those who do believe and yet live in sin! The prison for these last he would call the prison for fools.

I.

The Blessed John of Avila would have wished to divide the world into two prisons : one for *those who do not believe*, and the other for *those who believe and yet live in sin* at a distance from God—the prison for these last he would call the prison for fools. But the great misery and misfortune of these unhappy men is that they imagine themselves wise and prudent, whereas they are the most foolish and the most stupid people in the world ; and the worst is, that they are innumerable : *The number of fools is infinite*—(Eccles. i. 15). Some are mad for the honours of this world, some for its pleasures, some for the filthy things of this earth. And such as these presume to designate as mad the Saints who despise the goods of this world to gain eternal salvation and the only true Good, which is God. They call it madness to embrace contempt, and to pardon injuries ; madness to deprive themselves of sensual pleasures and to embrace mortifications : madness to renounce honours and riches and to love solitude and a humble and hidden life. But they do not reflect that their wisdom is called folly by the Lord : *The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God*—(1 Cor. iii. 19).

Ah, my Jesus, I am not worthy to be called Thy child because I have so often insulted Thee to Thy face : *Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son : I have sinned against heaven and before thee.* But I know that Thou goest in search of the lost sheep, and Thy consolation is to embrace Thy lost children. My beloved Father, I grieve for having offended Thee ; I cast myself at Thy feet and embrace Thee ; I will not depart until Thou dost pardon and bless me : *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.* Bless me, O my Father, and may Thy blessing give me a great sorrow for my sins, and a great love for Thee. I love Thee, O my Father ; I love Thee with all my heart. Do not permit me again to separate myself from Thee. Deprive me of all ; but deprive me not of Thy love. O Mary, if God is my Father, thou art my Mother. Do thou likewise bless

me. I do not deserve to be thy child; accept me for thy servant; but grant that I may be a servant who always tenderly loves thee, and always confides in thy protection.

II.

Sinners will surely one day confess their folly—but when? When there will be no remedy, and they will say in despair: *We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour*—(Wis. v. 4). Ah, fools that we have been, we regarded the lives of the Saints as folly; but now we know that we ourselves have been the fools: *Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints*—(Wis. v. 5). Behold, how they are already placed amongst the happy number of the children of God, and have secured their lot with the Saints—an eternal lot, which will render them happy for ever; and we remain among the number of the slaves of the devil, condemned to burn in this pit of torments for all eternity: *Therefore we have erred* (thus will they conclude their lamentation) *from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us*—(Wis. v. 6). We have erred, and have chosen to shut our eyes against the Divine light; and that which will render us most miserable is that our error will be without remedy as long as God shall be God.

What madness, then, for a vile interest, for a passing vapour, for a brief pleasure, to lose the grace of God! What does a subject not do to obtain the favour of his prince! O God, for a wretched gratification to lose the Sovereign Good, which is God! To lose Heaven! To lose even peace in this life, giving entrance into the soul to sin, which by its remorse will unceasingly torment it, and voluntarily to condemn oneself to everlasting misery!

Would you indulge in that forbidden pleasure if for it you were afterwards to have your hand burnt, or to be shut up for a year in a tomb? Would you commit that sin if after it you were to lose a hundred crowns? And

yet you believe and know that by sinning you lose Heaven and God, and are for ever condemned to the fire of hell—and yet you sin!

O God of my soul, what would have been my lot at this moment if Thou hadst not shown so many mercies to me! I should have been in hell, in that abode of fools like myself. I thank Thee, O Lord; and I beseech Thee not to abandon me to my blindness. I deserved to be deprived of Thy light; but I perceive that Thy grace has not yet forsaken me. I feel that it tenderly calls me, and invites me to ask pardon of Thee, and to hope for great things from Thee, notwithstanding my grievous offences against Thee. Yes, my Saviour, I hope to be accepted by Thee as a child.

Spiritual Reading

THE DANGER TO WHICH TEPIDITY EXPOSES THE SOUL.

Jesus Christ enlightens all men—*the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*—(Jo. i. 9)—but there are some He cannot enlighten, because they voluntarily close their eyes to the light, and walk in darkness. They are those who lead tepid lives in the service of God.

A tepid soul is not one that lives in enmity with God, nor one that sometimes commits venial sins through mere human frailty. On account of the corruption of nature by original sin, no man can be exempt from some venial faults. This corruption of nature renders it impossible for us, without a most special grace, which has been given only to the Mother of God, to avoid all venial sins during our whole lives. Hence St. John has said: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*—(1 Jo. i. 8). God permits defects of this kind, even in the Saints, to keep them humble,

and to make them feel that, as they commit such faults in spite of all their good purposes and promises, so also, were they not supported by His Divine hand, they would fall into mortal sin. Hence, when we find that we have committed these light faults, we must humble ourselves, and acknowledging our own weakness, we must be careful to recommend ourselves to God, and implore of Him to preserve us, by His Almighty hand, from more grievous transgressions, and to deliver us from those we have committed.

What, then, are we to understand by a tepid soul? A tepid soul is one that frequently falls into fully deliberate venial sins—such as deliberate lies, deliberate acts of impatience, deliberate imprecations, and the like. These faults may be easily avoided by those who are resolved to suffer death rather than commit a deliberate venial offence against God. St. Teresa used to say that one venial sin does us more harm than all the devils. Hence she would say to her nuns : " My children, from deliberate sin, however venial it may be, may the Lord deliver you." Some complain of being left in aridity and dryness and without any spiritual sweetness. But how can we expect that God will be liberal with His favours to us, when we are ungenerous to Him? We know that such a lie, such an imprecation, such an injury to our neighbour, and such detraction, though not mortal sins, are displeasing to God, and still we do not abstain from them. Why, then, should we expect that God will give us His Divine consolations?

But some of you will say : Venial sins, however great they may be, do not deprive the soul of the grace of God : even though I commit them I shall be saved; and for me it is enough to obtain eternal life. You say that for you it is enough to be saved. But remember St. Augustine says that " where you have said, ' It is enough,' there you have perished." To understand correctly the meaning of these words of St. Augustine, and to see the danger to which the state of tepidity exposes those who commit habitual and deliberate venial sins, without feeling remorse for them, and without endeav-

ouring to avoid them, it is necessary to know that the habit of light faults leads the soul insensibly to mortal sins. For example : the habit of venial acts of aversion leads to mortal hatred; the habit of small thefts leads to grievous rapine; the habit of venial attachments leads to affections which are mortally sinful. "The soul," says St. Gregory, "never lies where it falls." No; it continues to sink deeper and deeper. Just as mortal diseases do not generally proceed from serious indisposition, but from many slight and continued infirmities, so likewise the fall of many souls into mortal sin follows from habitual venial sins; for these render the soul so weak that when a strong temptation assails her she has not strength to resist it and she falls.

Many are unwilling to be separated from God by mortal sins. They wish to follow Him but, at a distance, and they disregard venial sins. But to them shall probably happen what befell St. Peter. When Jesus Christ was seized in the Garden, St. Peter was unwilling to abandon the Lord, but *followed him afar off*—(Matt. xxvi. 58). After entering the house of Caiphas he was charged with being a disciple of Jesus Christ. He was instantly seized with fear, and thrice denied his Master. The Holy Ghost says : *He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little*—(Ecclus. xix. 1). They who despise small falls will probably one day fall into an abyss; for, being in the habit of committing light offences against God, they will feel but little repugnance to offer to Him some grievous insult.

The Lord says : *Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines*—(Cant. ii. 15). He does not tell us to catch the lions or the bears, but *the little foxes*. Lions and bears strike terror, and therefore all are careful to keep at a distance through fear of being devoured by them; but the little foxes, though they do not excite dismay, *destroy the vines*. Mortal sin terrifies the timorous soul; but if it accustom itself to the commission of many venial sins with full deliberation, and without endeavouring to correct them, they, like the little foxes, shall destroy the roots—that is, the remorse of conscience,

the fear of offending God, and the holy desires of advancing in Divine love; and thus, being in a state of tepidity, and impelled to sin by some passion, the soul will easily abandon God and lose Divine grace.

Moreover, deliberate and habitual venial sins not only deprive us of strength to resist temptations, but also of the special helps without which we fall into grievous sins. This is a point of great importance that requires very serious attention. It is certain that of ourselves we have not sufficient strength to resist the temptations of the devil, of the flesh, and of the world. It is God that prevents our enemies from assailing us with temptations by which we would be conquered. Hence Jesus Christ has taught us the following prayer : *And lead us not into temptation.* He teaches us to pray that God may deliver us from the temptations to which we would yield, and thus lose His grace. Now, venial sins, when they are deliberate and habitual, deprive us of the special helps of God which are necessary for perseverance in His grace. I say *necessary,* because the Council of Trent anathematizes those who assert that we can persevere in grace without a special help from God. " If any one saith that the justified either is able to persevere, without the special help of God, in the justice received; or that, with that help, he is not able, let him be anathema." Thus, with the ordinary assistance of God, we cannot avoid falling into some mortal sin : a special aid is necessary. But this special aid God will justly withhold from tepid souls who are regardless of committing many and fully deliberate venial sins. Thus these unhappy souls shall not persevere in grace.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Let us not lose courage but keep our eyes ever fixed on the Crucified One, because from Him we shall draw strength to endure the evils of this life not only with patience, but even with joy and gladness, as the Saints have done: *Ye shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains*—(Is. xii. 3); that is, says St. Bonaventure, from the Wounds of Jesus Christ. Therefore the Saint exhorts us ever to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus dying upon the Cross, if we would live always united to God. "Devotion," says St. Thomas, "consists in being ready to accomplish in ourselves whatever God demands of us."

Observe the excellent advice St. Paul gives us, that we may live ever united with God, and may patiently endure the troubles of this present life: *Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds*—(Heb. xii. 3). He says *think diligently*; for in order to suffer with resignation and peace present troubles, it is not enough to give a hasty glance, a few times in the year, at the Passion of Jesus Christ; we must often meditate on it, and every day turn our eyes to the pain the Lord suffered for love of us. And what were the pains He suffered? The Apostle says: *He endured such contradiction.* The contradiction Jesus Christ endured from His enemies was such as to make Him, as it had been foretold by the Prophet, the vilest of men, and the man of sorrows, until He died of agony, overwhelmed with insults, upon a gibbet fit only for the most reprobate. And why did Jesus Christ embrace this burden of pain and insult? *That ye might not be*

wearied fainting in your minds; that, seeing how much a God has been willing to endure, in order to give us an example of patience, we might be patient, and endure all to be delivered from our sins.

II.

The Apostle, St. Paul, encourages us, saying: *Ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin* —(Heb. xii. 4). Remember therefore, that Christ poured forth for you all His Blood in His Passion through torments, and that the holy Martyrs, after the example of Him, their King, have courageously endured hot plates, and iron nails which have torn open their very bowels; but you have not shed a single drop of blood for Jesus Christ, while we ought to be ready to give our life rather than offend God, and to say with St. Edmund: I would rather leap into a flaming furnace than commit a sin against my God." And thus St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, said: "Had I to endure all the bodily pains of hell or commit a sin, rather than commit it, I would choose hell."

The infernal lion ceases not through all our life to go about seeking to devour us; therefore St. Peter tells us that, by thinking of the Passion of Christ, we ought to arm ourselves against his attacks. St. Thomas says that the mere recollection of the Passion is a great defence against all the temptations of hell. And St. Ambrose says: "If there had been any better way of salvation for men than the way of suffering, Christ would have shown it to us both by word and example; but now, going before us with the Cross upon His shoulders, He has shown us that there is no better way of obtaining salvation than suffering with patience and resignation, and He Himself has given us the example in His own Person."

Monday—Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"*AH, THAT THEY WOULD BE WISE!*"

Poor sinners! They labour, they spare not themselves in order to acquire worldly knowledge, and the art of gaining the good things of this life which is so soon to end! And these very men neglect the riches of the life that never ends! *Oh, that they would be wise!*

I.

Poor sinners! They labour, they spare not themselves in order to acquire worldly knowledge and the art of gaining the good things of this life which is so soon to end! And these very men neglect the riches of the life which never ends. They lose their reason to such a manner that they become not only madmen but brute beasts; for, living as such, they do not consider what is good and what is evil, but follow only the brutal instincts of sense, embracing that which at the moment is pleasing to the flesh, without reflecting upon what they lose, and the eternal ruin they draw down upon themselves. And thus they act, not as men but as brute beasts. St. John Chrysostom says: "We call him a man who preserves intact the image of man; but what is this image of man? To be rational." To be man is to be rational, that is, to act according to reason, not according to the sensual appetite. If God were to give to a beast the use of reason, and it were to act according to reason, we should say that it acted like a man;

so, on the contrary, when a man acts according to the senses, and contrary to reason, we must say that the man acts like a beast.

Ah, my God, Thou hast given me understanding, Thou hast given me the light of Faith; and I have hitherto acted like a brute beast, losing Thy grace for the wretched pleasures of sense, which have passed away as a breath of air; and now nothing remains of them but remorse of conscience, and a long account to render to Thy Divine justice. Ah, Lord, do not judge me according to my deserts, but according to Thy mercy! Give me light, give me sorrow for my offences against Thee, and pardon me. I am the lost sheep; and if Thou seekest me not I shall be for ever lost. Have pity on me for the sake of that Blood which Thou hast shed for the love of me.

II.

Oh, that they would be wise, and would understand, and would provide for their last end!—(Deut. xxxii. 29). He who acts with prudence, and according to reason, looks to the future, that is, to what must happen to him at the end of life; to Death, Judgment, and after that, Hell or Heaven. Oh, how much more wise is the peasant who saves his soul than the monarch who loses it! *Better is a child that is poor and wise, than a king that is old and foolish, who knoweth not to foresee for hereafter*—(Eccles. iv. 13). O my God, would not that man be universally considered mad, who, to gain a small sum at the present moment, should risk the loss of all his possessions! And shall we not consider him as such, who, for a momentary gratification imperils his soul and incurs the risk of losing it forever? The ruin of so many souls who are now lost was their caring only for present goods and ills, and not thinking upon those that are eternal.

God most certainly has not placed us in this world to become rich, to acquire honours, or to gratify our senses, but to gain eternal life: *And the end life everlasting*—(Rom. vi. 22); and to attain this end is all we ought

to care for : *One thing is necessary*—(Luke x. 42). But this end is just what sinners most despise; they think only of the present; they hasten forward to death; they approach the entrance to eternity, and they know not where they go! What would you think of a pilot, says St. Augustine, who, when asked where he was going, should answer that he did not know? Is he not bringing his ship to destruction? Such are those wise ones of the world, who know how to acquire wealth, to amuse themselves, to obtain high places; but know not how to save their souls. The glutton in the Gospel was well versed in the art of becoming rich; but he died and was buried in hell. Alexander the Great knew well how to conquer numerous kingdoms; but in a few years he died and all was lost to him. Henry VIII knew how to maintain his throne by rebelling against the Church; but in the end he himself, seeing that his soul was lost, confessed : "We have lost all!" How many wretches now weep and cry out in hell : *What hath pride profited us, or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things have passed away like a shadow*—(Wis. v. 8). Behold, for us all the goods of the world have passed as a shadow, and nothing remains of them but tears and eternal suffering.

Before man is life and death; . . . that which he shall choose shall be given him—(Ecclus. xv. 18). My brother, life and death are placed before you in this world : that is, to deprive yourself of forbidden pleasures, and gain eternal life; or to accept them, and with them eternal death. What say you? Which do you prefer? Choose as a man, and not as a beast. Choose as a Christian who has Faith, and says : *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*

O my sovereign Good, I repent of having left Thee, and of having voluntarily renounced Thy grace. I wish I could die of grief; but do Thou give me greater sorrow. Grant that I may gain Heaven, and there sing Thy

mercies. O Mary, my Mother, thou art my refuge; pray to Jesus for me; pray that He may pardon me, and may give me holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading

THE DANGER TO WHICH TEPIDITY EXPOSES THE SOUL.

He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly —(2 Cor. ix. 6). They who are ungenerous with God well deserve that God should not be liberal with them. To such souls the Lord will give graces common to all, but will probably withhold His special assistance; and without this, as we have seen, they cannot persevere in the state of grace. God Himself revealed to Blessed Henry Suso that, for tepid souls who are content with leading a life exempt from mortal sin, and continue to commit many deliberate venial sins, it is very difficult to preserve themselves from mortal sins. The Venerable Louis da Ponte used to say: "I commit many defects, but I never make peace with them." Woe to him who is at peace with his faults! St. Bernard teaches that, as long as a person who is guilty of defects detests his faults, there is reason to hope that he will one day correct them and amend his life: but when he commits faults without endeavouring to amend, he will continually go from bad to worse, till he loses God's grace. St. Augustine says that, like a certain disease of the skin which makes the body an object of disgust, habitual faults, when committed without any effort of amendment, render the soul so disgusting to God that He deprives it of His embraces. Hence the soul finding no more nourishment and consolation in its devout exercises, in its prayers, Communions, or Visits to the Blessed Sacrament will soon neglect them, and thus neglecting the

means of eternal salvation, it will be in great danger of being lost.

This danger will be still greater for those who commit many venial sins through attachment to any passion, such as pride, ambition, aversion to a neighbour, or an inordinate affection for any person. St. Francis of Assisi says that, in endeavouring to draw to sin any one that is afraid of being at enmity with God, the devil does not seek in the beginning to bind him with the chain of a slave, by tempting him to commit mortal sin, because he would have a horror of yielding to mortal sin, and would guard himself against it. He first endeavours to bind him by a single hair; then by a slender thread; next by a cord; afterwards by a rope; and in the end by a chain of hell—that is, by mortal sin; and thus he makes him his slave. For example: A person cherishes an affection for a woman through a motive of courtesy or of gratitude, or from an esteem for her good qualities. This affection is followed by mutual presents; to these succeed words of tenderness; and after the first violent assault of the devil, the miserable man shall find that he has fallen into mortal sin. He meets with the fate of gamblers, who, after frequently losing large sums of money, yield to an impulse of passion, risk their all, and, in the end, lose their whole property.

Miserable the soul that allows itself to be the slave of any passion. *Behold, how small a fire what a great wood it kindleth*—(James iii. 5). A small spark, if it be not extinguished, will set an entire forest on fire. An unmortified passion shall bring the soul to ruin. Passion blinds us; and the blind often fall into an abyss when they least expect it. According to St. Ambrose, the devil is constantly endeavouring to find out the passion which rules in our heart, and the pleasures which have the greatest attraction for us. When he discovers them, he presents occasions of indulging them: he then excites concupiscence, and prepares a chain to make us the slaves of hell.

St. John Chrysostom asserts that he himself knew

many persons who were gifted with great virtues, and who, because they disregarded light faults, fell into an abyss of crime. When the devil cannot gain much from us he is in the beginning content with very little; by many trifling victories he will make a great conquest. No one, says St. Bernard, suddenly falls from the state of grace into the abyss of wickedness. They who rush into the most grievous irregularities, he says, begin by committing light faults. It is necessary also to understand that, when any one that has been favoured by God with special lights and graces consents to mortal sin, his fall will not be a simple fall, from which he will easily rise again, but it will be a precipitous one, from which he will find it very difficult ever to return to God.

Addressing a person in the state of tepidity, our Lord said: *I would that thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth*—(Apoc. iii. 15). *I would thou wert cold*—that is, it would be better for thee to be deprived of My grace, because there would then be greater hopes of thy amendment; but, because thou livest in tepidity, without any desire of improvement, *I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth*. By these words God means that He will begin to abandon the soul.

A certain author says that tepidity is a hectic fever, which does not excite alarm because it is not perceived; but it is, at the same time, so malignant that it is rarely cured. The comparison is very just; for tepidity makes the soul insensible to remorse of conscience; and, as she is accustomed to feel no remorse for venial faults she will by degrees become insensible to the stings of remorse which arise from mortal sins.

Let us come to the remedy. The amendment of a tepid soul is difficult; but there are remedies for those who wish to adopt them.

1.—The tepid must sincerely desire to be delivered from a state which, as we have seen, is so miserable

and dangerous; for, without this desire, they will not take pains to employ the proper means.

2.—They must resolve to remove the occasions of their faults; otherwise they will always relapse into the same defects.

3.—They must earnestly beg of the Lord to raise them from so wretched a state. By their own strength they can do nothing; but they can do all things with the assistance of God Who has promised to hear the prayers of all. *Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find*—(Luke xi. 9). We must pray and continue to pray without interruption. If we cease to pray we shall be defeated; but if we persevere in prayer we shall conquer.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

St. Bernard says that when we look upon the afflictions of our Lord, we shall find our own lighter to bear. And in another place he says: "What can be other than sweet to thee when thou takest to thyself all the bitterness of the Lord." St. Eleazar, being one day asked by his good wife, Delphina, how he bore so many injuries with a calm mind, replied: "When I see myself injured I think on the injuries of my crucified Saviour, and cease not to think of them until I am calmed." "Sweet is the ignominy of the Cross to him who is not ungrateful to the Crucified," says St. Bernard.

To souls that wish to be grateful to Jesus Christ the contempt they receive is welcome. Who will not gladly embrace opprobrium and ill-treatment when he thinks of the ill-treatment Jesus endured in the commencement of His Passion, when, in the house of Caiphas, He was

on that night struck with blows and stripes, spit upon in the face, and, with a cloth covering His eyes, derided as a false prophet?

And how did it ever happen that the Martyrs endured with such patience the torments of executioners? They were torn with irons, they were burned upon hot gratings. Were they not make of flesh and blood, or had they lost all sense? No; when the Martyr sees his blood, he thinks not of his own wounds but of those of his Redeemer; he does not feel pain—not that there is none, but for Jesus Christ's sake it is despised. There is nothing so bitter, even in death, that it is not sweetened by the death of Christ.

II.

The Apostle writes that through the merits of Jesus Christ we are all made rich. But Jesus Christ desires that in order to obtain the graces we need, we should ever have recourse to God in prayer, and beseech Him to hear us through the merits of His Son; and Jesus Himself promises that whatever we ask the Father in His Name He will give it to us. Thus did the Martyrs act; for when the pain of their torments was too sharp and bitter they went to God, and God gave them patience to endure. The Martyr St. Theodore, in the midst of all the cruelties inflicted on him, feeling at one time a most terrible torture from the balls of hot chalk the tyrant had put upon his wounds, besought Jesus Christ to give him strength to suffer, and thus remained conqueror, ending his life in torments.

We need not fear the attacks we have to endure from the world and from hell; if we take heed to have constant recourse to Jesus Christ with prayer, He will grant us every blessing and give us patience in all our labours, perseverance to the end, and a good death.

Tuesday—Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

TRUE WISDOM.

We see that the truly wise are those who know how to acquire Divine grace and Heaven. Let us pray the Lord to give us the wisdom of the Saints which He bestows on those who ask it of Him. *She gave him the knowledge of holy things.*

I.

We see that the truly wise are those who know how to acquire Divine grace and Heaven. Let us pray the Lord to give us the wisdom of the Saints which He bestows on those who ask it of Him. *She gave him the knowledge of holy things*—(Wis. x. 10). Oh, it is a noble science, to know how to love God, and to save our souls, which consists in knowing how to choose the way of eternal salvation and the means of obtaining it. The affair of salvation is, of all affairs, the most necessary. If we should know all things, and not know how to save our souls, it would avail us nothing, and we should be eternally miserable; but, on the other hand, we shall be for ever happy if we know how to love God, even though we should be ignorant of all other things: "Blessed is he who knows Thee, though he be ignorant of all besides," said St. Augustine. One day Brother Giles said to St. Bonaventure: "Happy art thou, Father Bonaventure, who knowest so many things; and I, poor ignorant man, know nothing; thou canst become more

holy than I can." "Attend to me," replied the Saint, "if a poor ignorant old woman were to know how to love God more than I do, she would be more holy than I am." Upon which Brother Giles began to cry aloud: "O poor old woman, poor old woman, listen! listen! If you love God, you can become more holy than Father Bonaventure!"

St. Augustine says: "The ignorant rise up and bear away the Kingdom of Heaven." How many rude peasants are there who know not how to read, but know how to love God and so save their souls; and how many of the learned ones of this world lose their souls! The former, then, and not the latter, are truly wise. Oh, how truly wise was a St. Paschal, a St. Felix the Capuchin, a St. John of God, although ignorant of all human sciences! How truly wise have those been who, leaving the world, have shut themselves up in cloisters or lived in the desert, like a St. Benedict, a St. Francis of Assisi, or a St. Louis of Toulouse who renounced his throne. How truly wise so many Martyrs and so many Virgins, who renounced the nuptials of the great ones of this world to go and die for Jesus Christ. Even worldlings recognise this truth, and hesitate not to say of such a one who has given himself to God: Blessed is he who is thus truly wise, and saves his soul! In fine, those who leave the good things of this world to give themselves to God are said to be undeceived. What, then, ought those to be called who leave God for worldly goods, but deluded men? My brother, to which of these two classes do you wish to belong?

O Father of Mercies, look upon my misery, and have pity on me! Give me light, and make me sensible of my past folly, in order that I may weep over it, and know Thy infinite goodness, that I may love it. My Jesus, *deliver not up to beasts the souls that confess to thee*—(Ps. lxxiii. 19). Thou hast shed Thy Blood for my sake; do not permit me any longer to be a slave of devils, as I have hitherto been. I repent, O Sovereign Good, of having abandoned Thee. I curse all those moments in which I willingly consented to sin; and I embrace Thy

holy will, which desires my good alone. Eternal Father, through the merits of Jesus Christ, give me strength to do all that is pleasing to Thee.

II.

In order that you may make the right choice, St. John Chrysostom advises you, saying: "Let us go to the tombs of the dead!" They are excellent schools for learning the vanity of this world's perishable riches and the Science of the Saints. Tell me, says Chrysostom, canst thou distinguish them—who has been a prince, who a noble, who a man of letters? "For my part," the Saint declares, "I see only rottenness, bones, and worms! All is fable, a dream, a shadow!" All the things of this world will ere long come to an end, and vanish like a comedy, a dream, a shadow. But, dear Christian, if you wish to be wise, it is not enough to know the importance of your end; you must adopt the means for obtaining eternal happiness. All men would wish to save their souls and to become saints; but because they do not employ suitable means, they do not become saints, and they lose their souls. We must fly the occasions of sin, frequent the Sacraments, pray, and above all, establish in our hearts these maxims of the Gospel: *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world?*—(Matt. xvi. 26). *He that loveth his life shall lose it*—(Jo. xii. 25); that is to say, we must even sacrifice life itself to save our souls. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself*—(Matt. xvi. 24). In order to follow Jesus Christ, we must deny our self-love the gratifications it seeks. Our salvation depends upon doing the Divine will: *Life is in his will*—(Ps. xxix. 6). These and similar maxims must be graven on our hearts.

Let me die, O Lord, rather than any more oppose Thy will. Assist me with Thy grace to place all my love in Thee alone, and to detach my heart from all such affections as do not tend to Thee. I love Thee, O God of my soul, I love Thee above all things; and from Thee I

hope for all my good, for pardon, for perseverance in Thy love, and for Paradise, that I may there love Thee in eternity. O Mary, ask these graces for me. Thy Son denies thee nothing. My hope, in thee I confide.

Spiritual Reading

CONFORMITY TO THE HOLY WILL OF GOD.

In order to acquire a facility in doing, on all occasions, the holy will of God, we must beforehand offer ourselves continually to embrace in peace whatever God ordains or wills. Such was the practice of holy David. He would say : *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready*—(Ps. cvii. 2). And he continually besought the Lord to teach him to do the Divine will. *Teach me to do thy will*—(Ps. cxlii. 10). He thus deserved to be called a man according to God's own heart. *I have found David the son of Jesse, a man according to my own heart, who shall do all my wills*—(Acts xiii. 22). And why? Because the holy king was always ready to do whatever God wished him to do.

St. Teresa offered herself to God fifty times in the day, that He might dispose of her as He pleased; and she declared her readiness to embrace either prosperity or adversity. The perfection of our oblation consists in our offering ourselves to God without reserve. All are prepared to unite themselves to the Divine will when things are prosperous, but perfection consists in conforming to it even in adversity. To thank God in all things that are agreeable to us, is acceptable to Him; but to accept with cheerfulness what is repugnant to our inclinations is still more pleasing to Him. Blessed John of Avila used to say : "A single *Blessed be God!* in adversity, is better than six thousand thanksgivings in prosperity."

We should conform to the Divine will, not only in

misfortunes which come directly from God—such as sickness, loss of property, privation of friends and relatives—but also in crosses which come to us from men, but indirectly from God—such as acts of injustice, defamations, calumnies, injuries, and all other sorts of persecutions. But, you may ask, does God will that others commit sin, by injuring us in our property or in our reputation? No; God wills not their sin; but He does will that we should bear with such a loss and with such a humiliation; and to conform ourselves on all such occasions to His Divine will.

Good things and evil . . . are from God—(Ecclus. xi. 14). All blessings—such as riches and honours—and all misfortunes—such as sickness and persecutions—come from God. But mark that the Scriptures call them evils, only because we, through the want of conformity to the will of God, regard them as evils or misfortunes. For in reality, if we accepted them from the hands of God with Christian resignation, they would be blessings and not evils. The jewels which give the greatest splendour to the crown of the Saints in Heaven are the tribulations they bore with patience, as coming from the hands of the Lord. On hearing that the Sabeans had taken away all his oxen and asses, holy Job said: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*—(Job i. 21). He did not say that the Lord gave, and that the Sabeans had taken away; but that the Lord gave, and that the Lord had taken away: and therefore he blessed the Lord, believing that all had happened through the Divine will. *As it has pleased the Lord, so it is done; blessed be the name of the Lord*—(Job i. 21). Being tormented with iron hooks and burning torches, the holy Martyrs Epictetus and Atone said: "Lord, Thy will be done in us." And their last words were: "May Thou be blessed, O Eternal God, for having given us the grace to accomplish Thy will."

Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad—(Prov. xii. 21). A soul that loves God is not disturbed by any misfortune that may happen to her. Cesarius relates that a certain monk who did not

perform greater austerities than his companions wrought many miracles. Being astonished at this, the Abbot asked him one day what were the works of piety he practised. He answered, that he was more imperfect than the other monks; but that his sole concern was to conform himself to the Divine will. Were you displeased, said the Abbot, with the person who injured us so grievously a few days ago? No, Father, replied the monk; I on the contrary, thanked God for it; because I know that He does or permits all things for our good. From this answer the Abbot perceived the sanctity of the good Religious. We should act in a similar manner under all the crosses that come upon us. Let us always say: *Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight*—(Matt. xi. 26). Lord, this is pleasing to Thee, let it be done.

He that acts in this manner enjoys that peace which the Angels announced at the Birth of Jesus Christ to men of good will—that is, to those whose wills are united to the will of God. These, as the Apostle says, enjoy that peace which exceeds all earthly delights. *The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding*—(Phil. iv. 7). A great and solid peace, which is not liable to change. *A holy man continueth in wisdom like the sun; but a fool is changed like the moon*—(Ecclus. xxvii. 12). Fools—that is, sinners—are changed like the moon, which increases to-day and wanes to-morrow; to-day they are seen to laugh through folly, to-morrow to weep through despair; to-day they are humble and meek; to-morrow proud and furious. In a word, sinners change with prosperity and adversity; but the just are like the sun, always the same, always serene in whatever happens to them. In the inferior part of the soul they cannot but feel some pain at the misfortunes which befall them; but, as long as the will remains united to the will of God, nothing can deprive them of that spiritual joy which is not subject to the vicissitudes of this life. *Your joy no man shall take from you*—(Jo. xvi. 22).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The bitterness we shall have to endure at the hour of death will be very great. Only Jesus Christ can give us constancy to suffer with patience and merit. Especially great then are the temptations of hell, which will strive with might and main to destroy us, seeing us near our end. Rinaldus relates that St. Eleazar, at the point of death, endured horrible attacks from the devils, after leading a most holy life, so that he said: "Great are the temptations of hell at this moment, but Jesus Christ, by the merits of His Passion, destroys all their power." St. Francis directed that at the hour of his death the Passion should be read to him. In like manner, St. Charles Borromeo, seeing himself near death, had the representations of the instruments of the Passion brought to him, that in sight of these he might breathe out his blessed soul.

St. Paul writes that Jesus Christ chose to endure death, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who, through fear of death, were through their whole life subject to bondage. And he adds: *Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren that he might become a merciful high-priest before God . . . For in that wherein he himself hath suffered and been tempted, he is able to succour them also that are tempted*—(Heb. ii. 17-18). Christ chose to take on Him all the circumstances and passions of human nature (except ignorance, concupiscence, and sin); and wherefore? That He might be merciful, and by taking on Himself our miseries, He might be more compassionate to us, because misery is much better

known by experience than by reflection; and thus He became more ready to help us when we are tempted during life, and especially at the hour of death. To this the saying of St. Augustine refers: "If you are disturbed at the time of death, do not think yourself a castaway, nor give yourself up to despair; for Christ Himself was thus disturbed at the prospect of His own death."

II.

At the hour of our death hell will put forth all its strength to make us distrust the Divine mercy, by placing before our eyes all the sins of our life; but the thought of the death of Jesus Christ will give us courage to trust in His merits, and not to fear death. St. Thomas on St. Paul's words says: "Christ, by death, took away the fear of death, for when a man reflects that the Son of God chose to die, he does not fear death." To the Gentiles death was an object of the greatest terror, because they thought that with death every blessing ceased; but the death of Jesus Christ gives us a firm hope that, dying in the grace of God, we shall pass from death to eternal life. Of this hope St. Paul gives us a sure confidence, saying that the Eternal Father did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; *and how hath he not with him given us all things?*—(Rom. viii. 32). For in giving us Jesus Christ He gives us pardon, final perseverance, His love, a good death, eternal life, and every blessing.

Wednesday—Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

CONFORMITY TO THE HOLY WILL OF GOD.

I.—ITS EXCELLENCE.

Life in his good will—(Ps xxix. 6). Our entire salvation and perfection consists in loving God. *Have charity which is the bond of perfection*, says the Apostle, but the perfection of Charity consists in conformity to the Divine Will.

I.

Our entire salvation and perfection consists in loving God. *He that loveth not abideth in death*—(1 Jo. iii. 14). *Above all these things have Charity which is the bond of perfection*—(Col. iii. 14). But the perfection of love consists in conformity to the Divine will; for, as St. Denis the Areopagite says, the principal effect of love is to unite the wills of those who love, so that they may have but one heart and one will. Hence our actions, our works of penance, our Communions and alms-deeds, please God only inasmuch as they are conformable to the Divine will; for, if they are not conformable to the will of God, they are not good works, but are defective, and deserving of chastisement. Our Saviour came down from Heaven principally to teach us by example to conform ourselves to the will of God. Behold what He said at His entrance into this world: *Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not: but a body thou hast fitted to me . . . Then, said I: Behold, I come . . . that I should do thy will, O God*—(Heb. x. 5). O My Father,

Thou hast refused the victims offered by men; Thou wishest that, by My death, I should sacrifice this Body which Thou hast given Me; behold Me ready to do Thy will. This Jesus frequently declared, saying that He came on earth only to do the will of His Father. *I came down from Heaven, not to do my will, but the will of him that sent me*—(Jo. vi. 38). And by going to die through obedience to the will of His Father, Jesus wished to make known to us His great love for His Father. *That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I. Arise; let us go hence*—(Jo. xiv. 31). Wherefore He has said that He acknowledges for His disciples only those who fulfil the Divine will. *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in Heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother*—(Matt. xii. 50). The accomplishment of the Divine will has been the only object and desire of the Saints in all their works. Blessed Henry Suso used to say: "I would rather be the vilest worm on earth in conformity to the will of God, than be a seraph by my own will." And St. Teresa: "All he who practises prayer should seek is to conform his will to the Divine will; and let him be assured that in this consists the highest perfection. He who practises it best will receive the greatest gifts from God, and will make the greatest progress in spiritual life." The Blessed in Heaven love God perfectly, because they are in all things conformed to the Divine will. Hence Jesus Christ has taught us to do the will of God on earth as the Saints do it in Heaven. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.* He who does the will of God, will, like King David, become a man according to God's own heart. *I have found a man according to my own heart, who shall do all my wills*—(Acts xiii. 22). And why? Because David was always prepared to do whatever God wished. *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready*—(Ps. cvii. 2). He asked nothing else from the Lord than to teach him to do God's will.

I love Thee, O infinite Goodness, and through the love

which I bear Thee, I offer myself entirely to Thee. Dispose of me and of all I possess as Thou pleasest : I resign myself entirely to Thy holy will. Preserve me from the misfortune of doing anything against Thy holy will, and then treat me as Thou mayest wish. Eternal Father, hear me for the love of Jesus Christ. My Jesus, hear me through the merits of Thy Passion. Most Holy Mary, assist me ; obtain for me the grace to fulfill the Divine will, in the accomplishment of which my salvation entirely consists : obtain this grace for me, and I ask nothing more.

II.

Oh ! how great is the value of an act of perfect resignation to the will of God. It is sufficient to make a Saint ! While St. Paul was persecuting the Church, Jesus appeared to him, enlightened, and converted him. The Saint only offered himself to do the Divine will. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*—(Acts ix. 6). And behold, Jesus Christ instantly declared him a vessel of election and Apostle of the Gentiles : *This man is to me a vessel of election to carry my name before the Gentiles*—(Acts ix. 15). He who fasts, gives alms, or mortifies himself for God's sake, gives a part of himself to God ; but the man who gives his will to God gives himself entirely to God. All that God asks of us is our heart—that is, our will. *My son, give me thy heart.* In a word, the accomplishment of the Divine will must be the object of all our desires, of our devotions, meditations, Communions, etc. The object of all our prayers must be to obtain from God the grace to do His will. And for this purpose we must implore the intercession of our holy advocates, and particularly of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that they may procure for us light and strength to conform ourselves to the will of God in all things, but particularly in embracing what is opposed to self-love. The Blessed John of Avila used to say : "A single *Blessed be God!* in adversity is better than six thousand acts of thanksgiving in prosperity."

Ah, my God, all the evils of my past life have arisen

from a want of conformity to Thy will. O God of my soul, I detest and curse a thousand times the days and moments in which I have, in order to do my own will, contradicted Thy holy will. I now give my whole will to Thee. Accept it, O my Lord, and bind it so firmly to Thy love that it may never more be able to rebel against Thee.

Spiritual Reading

CONFORMITY TO THE HOLY WILL OF GOD.

II.—MAN'S SOLE HAPPINESS ON EARTH.

He that reposes in the Divine will is like a man placed above the clouds : he sees the lightning, and hears the rolling of the thunder, and the raging of the tempest below, but he is not injured or disturbed. And how can he ever be disturbed when he always desires whatever happens? He that desires only what pleases God always obtains whatsoever he wishes, because all that happens to him, happens through the will of God. Salvian says that Christians who are resigned, if they be in a low condition of life, wish to be in that state; if they be poor they desire poverty; because they wish whatever God wills, and therefore they are always content. If cold, or heat, or rain, or wind come, he that is united to the will of God says : I wish for this cold, this heat, this rain, and this wind, because God wills them. If loss of property, persecution, sickness, or even death come upon him, he says : I wish for this loss, this persecution, this sickness; I even wish for death, when it comes, because God wills it. And how can a person who seeks to please God enjoy greater happiness than that which arises from cheerfully embracing the cross which God sends him, and from the conviction that, in embracing it, he pleases God in the highest degree? So great was the joy which St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to feel at the bare mention of *the will of God*, that she would fall into an ecstasy.

But how great the folly of those who resist the Divine will, and, instead of receiving tribulations with patience, get angry, and accuse God of treating them with injustice and cruelty! Perhaps they expect that in consequence of their opposition what God wills shall not happen. *Who resisteth his will?*—(Rom. ix. 19). Miserable men! instead of lightening the cross which God sends them, they make it more heavy and painful. *Who hath resisted him and hath peace?*—(Job ix. 4).

Let us be resigned to the Divine will, and we shall thus render our crosses light, and shall gain great treasures of merits for eternal life. In sending us tribulations, God intends to make us Saints. *This is the will of God, your sanctification*—(1 Thess. iv. 3). He sends us crosses, not because He wishes evil to us, but because He desires our welfare, and because He knows that they are conducive to our salvation. *All things work together unto good*—(Rom. viii. 28). Even the chastisements which come from the Lord are not for our destruction, but for our good and for the correction of our faults. *Let us believe that these scourges of the Lord . . . have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction*—(Judith viii. 27). God loves us so tenderly that He not only desires but is solicitous about our welfare. *The Lord is careful for me*, says David —(Ps. xxxix. 18).

Let us, then, always throw ourselves into the arms of God Who so ardently desires and so anxiously watches over our eternal salvation. *Casting all your care upon him; for he hath care of you*—(1 Pet. v. 7). He who, during life, casts himself into the arms of God, will lead a happy life and die a holy death. He who dies resigned to the Divine will, dies a Saint; but they who shall not have been united to the Divine will during life, will not conform to it at death, and will not be saved. The accomplishment of the Divine will should be the sole object of all our thoughts during the remainder of our days. To this end we should direct all our devotions, our Meditations, Communions, Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and all our prayers. We should constantly

beg of God to teach and help us to do His will. *Teach me to do thy will*—(Ps. cxlii. 10). Let us, at the same time, offer ourselves to accept without reserve whatever God ordains, saying, with the Apostle : *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*—(Acts. ix. 6). Lord, tell me what Thou dost wish me to do; I desire to do Thy will. And in all things, whether they be pleasing or painful, let us always have in our mouths that petition of the *Our Father—Thy will be done.* Let us frequently repeat it in the day with all the affection of our hearts. Happy we if we live and die saying : Thy will be done !—*Fiat voluntas Tua!*

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

When the devil attempts to frighten us during life or at death by representing to us the sins of our youth, let us answer him with St. Bernard : " What is wanting to me of myself, I take to myself from the bowels of my Lord." St. Paul writes : *Who is he that shall condemn? Christ Jesus that died, yea, that is risen also again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*—(Rom. viii. 34). These words of the Apostle are of great comfort to us sinners; it is God who justifies us sinners, and pardons us with His grace; and if God renders us guiltless, who can condemn us as guilty? Will Jesus Christ, Who died for us, and gave Himself for our sins, that He might redeem us from the present evil world?

He burdened Himself with our sins and gave Himself up to death to deliver us from this wicked world, and to bring us with Himself to His Kingdom, where as St. Paul goes on to say, He performs the office of our Advocate, and intercedes for us with the Father. St.

Thomas explains this, saying that Jesus Christ intercedes for us in Heaven by presenting to His Father His Wounds which He endured for love of us.

II.

St. Gregory does not hesitate to assert (in opposition to what some say) that the Redeemer, as man, ever since His death, prays for the Church militant, that we may be faithful to Him: "Christ daily prays for His Church." And St. Gregory Nazianzen before has said: "He intercedes, that is, He prays for us by way of mediation." And St. Augustine, on the thirty-ninth Psalm, says that Jesus prays for us in Heaven, not that He may now obtain for us any fresh grace, for during His life He obtained all He could obtain; but He prays, inasmuch as He begs of the Father, through His merits, the salvation already obtained and promised to us. And though to Christ all power is committed by the Father, yet, as Man, He only possesses this power as depending upon God. The Church, however, is not accustomed to ask Him to *intercede for us*, because she regards that which is most exalted in Him, that is, His Divinity; and therefore she prays to Him as God *to grant* what she asks.

Thursday—Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

(For the Twenty-Fifth of August).

THE MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY OF THE INFANT JESUS.

Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart —(Matt. xi. 29). Pride was the chief cause of the fall

of our First Parents. Unwilling to submit to obedience and obey the commands of God, they brought ruin on themselves and on the whole human race. But to repair the universal ruin God in His mercy decreed that His only-begotten Son should humble Himself, take upon Him our flesh, and by the example of His life induce men to love humility and detest pride.

I.

Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart. Pride was the chief cause of the fall of our First Parents. Unwilling to submit to obedience and obey the commands of God they brought ruin on themselves and on the whole human race. But to repair the universal ruin God in His mercy decreed that His only-begotten Son should humble Himself, take upon Him our flesh, and by the example of His life induce men to love humility and detest pride. St. Bernard invites us to visit the Cave of Bethlehem, saying : " Let us go over to Bethlehem and there we shall find what to admire, what to love and what to imitate."

Yes, in the Cave we have what to admire, what to wonder at. A God in a stable ! A God on straw ! That same God Who sits on the highest throne of majesty in Heaven ! *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated*—(Is. vi. 1), says the Prophet Isaias. And where do we find Him now? In a manger, unknown, abandoned, with none in attendance save a few poor shepherds and two animals. Again, we have here what to love. We find One in Whom to place our affection, seeing here a God Who is infinite Good, and has chosen to abase Himself by appearing to men as a poor Infant, that thereby He might make Himself more endearing and pleasing in our eyes. But, as St. Bernard says : " the more lowly He appears to me the dearer He is to me." And we find in the Cave what to imitate. We find the Supreme Being, the King of Heaven, become an humble little Child, desirous from His very Birth to teach us by example what He was afterwards to tell us

by word of mouth: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart!*

O my despised Jesus, Thou hast by Thy example done only too much to render reproaches and contempt sweet in the eyes of those who love Thee! But how is it, then, that instead of embracing them, as Thou hast done, when I receive some little contempt from men, I behave with so much pride, and take occasion from it to offend Thy infinite Majesty, sinner and proud that I am? Ah, Lord, I see why it is; I do not know how to bear an affront patiently, because I do not know how to love Thee. Did I love Thee truly, it would be sweet and pleasing to me. But since Thou dost promise pardon to him who repents, I repent with all my heart of all the excesses of my life—a life so unlike Thine. But I desire to amend; and therefore I promise Thee to suffer with patience from this day forward all the contempt to which I shall be subject, for Thy love, O my Jesus, Who wast so much despised for the love of me. I understand that humiliations are precious mines from which Thou dost enrich souls with eternal treasures. I deserve far other humiliations and other reproaches for having despised Thy grace; I deserve to be trampled on by the devils. But Thy merits are my hope. I will change my life, and will no longer displease Thee; henceforth I will seek for nothing but Thy Divine pleasure. I have deserved many times to be sent to burn in hell-fire; Thou hast waited for me till now, and, as I hope, hast pardoned me; grant therefore that instead of burning in those terrible flames, I may be inflamed with the blessed fire of Thy holy love.

II.

Who does not know that God is the first and the highest in nobility, and the source whence all nobility proceeds? He is infinite greatness. He is independent; for He has not received His greatness from any other, but has always possessed it in Himself. He is the Lord of all, Whom all creatures obey: *The winds and the sea obey him*—(Matt. viii. 27). Truly, therefore, does the

Apostle say that to God alone belong honour and glory : *To the only God be honour and glory*—(1 Tim. i. 17).

But the Eternal Word, to provide a remedy for man's disgrace, which was brought about by his own pride, having made Himself an example of poverty in order to detach man from worldly goods, desired to make Himself also an example of humility in order to free us from the vice of pride.

And in doing this the first and greatest example of humility the Son of God gave was to become a man, and clothe himself with our miseries : *In habit found as a man*—(Phil. ii. 7). Cassian says that any one who puts on the dress of another hides himself under it; in like manner God hid His Divine Nature under the lowly dress of human flesh. And St. Bernard : " The Divine Majesty became little in order that It might be united to our earthly nature; and that God and clay, majesty and weakness, the most extreme abasement and the highest majesty, might be united in one Person." A God to unite Himself to dust! Greatness to misery! Sublime majesty to wretchedness! But that which must make us wonder still more is that not only did God choose to appear as a creature, but as a sinful creature, putting on sinful flesh : *God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh*—(Rom. viii. 3).

O my Jesus, pardon me the pride of my past life and give me love in its place. I love Thee, my despised Saviour. I will no longer live without loving Thee. Help me, and let me not live any more ungrateful to Thee, as I have hitherto done. For the future I will love Thee only; I desire that my heart may belong to Thee alone. Ah, take possession of it and keep it forever, that I may be always Thine and Thou mayest be always mine; that I may love Thee; and Thou mayest love me. Yes, that is my hope, O my God, that I shall always love Thee, and that Thou wilt always love me. I believe in Thee, O infinite Goodness! I hope in Thee, O infinite Goodness, I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! I love Thee, and I will say it always : I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee; and because I love Thee I will do

all I can to please Thee. Dispose of me as Thou wilt. All I ask is that Thou wouldst give me grace to love Thee, and then do with me as Thou pleasest. Thy love is, and always shall be, my only treasure, my only desire, my only good, my only love. Mary, my hope, Mother of beautiful love, do thou help me in loving the God of love with all my heart and forever.

Spiritual Reading

"A SIGN WHICH SHALL BE CONTRADICTED."

The Son of God was not content to appear as a man, or even as a sinful man. He desired further to choose the most lowly and humble life among men; so that Isaias called Him the last, the most humble of men: *Despised and the most abject of men*—(Is. liii. 3). Jeremias said: *He shall be filled with reproaches*—(Lam. iii. 30. And David, that He should be: *The reproach of men, and the outcast of the people*—(Ps. xxi. 7). And for this did Jesus Christ wish to be born in the most abject state that could be imagined. What ignominy for a man, even though he be poor, to be born in a stable! Who is there so poor as to be born in a stable? The poor are born in their huts, at least on beds of straw. Stables are fit only for beasts and worms; and the Son of God chose to be born on this earth like a worm: *I am a worm, and no man*—(Ps. xxi. 7). Yes, says St. Augustine, in such humility did the King of the Universe choose to be born, in order to show us His majesty and power in His very humility, so that He might through His example make those men, who are born full of pride, love humility.

An Angel announced to the shepherds the birth of the Messias; and the signs he gave them by which they might find Him and recognize Him were all signs of humility. When you shall find a child, said he, in a stable, wrapped up in rags, and lying in a manger on the

straw, know that it is your Saviour : *And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger*—(Luke ii. 12). In such a state is it that we find a God Who is coming to this earth to destroy pride.

The life Jesus Christ led in exile in Egypt was in conformity with His birth. During those years He lived as a stranger, unknown, and in poverty, in the midst of pagans. Who knew Him there? Who made any account of Him?

He returned to Judea, and continued to live the same sort of a life. He lived for thirty years in a workshop, supposed by all to be the son of a common workman, doing the work of a serving-boy, poor, unnoticed, despised. In that Holy Family there were no servants. "Joseph and Mary," writes St. Peter Chrysologus, "have neither servant nor servant-maid : they themselves are at once master and servant." There was but one servant in that family, and He was the Son of God, Who wished to become the Son of Man, that is, of Mary, that He might be an humble Servant, and obey a man and a woman as their servant : *And he was subject to them*—(Luke ii. 51).

After thirty years of hidden life, the time came that our Saviour was to appear in public to preach the heavenly doctrines He had come from Heaven to teach us; and therefore it was necessary that he should make Himself known as the true Son of God. But, O my God! how many were there that acknowledged and honoured Him as He deserved? Besides the few disciples who followed Him, all the rest, instead of honouring Him, despised Him as a vile man and an impostor. Ah, then was verified in the fullest manner the prophecy of Simeon : *This child is set . . . for a sign which shall be contradicted*—(Luke ii. 34). Jesus Christ was contradicted and despised by all : He was despised in His doctrine; for when He declared that He was the only-begotten Son of God, He was called a blasphemer, and as such was condemned to death. *He hath blasphemed! He is guilty of death*—(Matt. xxvi. 65-66). His wisdom was despised,

for He was esteemed a fool without sense : *He is mad : why hear you him?*—(Jo. x. 20). His morals were reproached as being scandalous—they called Him a glutton, a drunkard, and the friend of wicked people : *Behold a man that is a glutton, and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners*—(Luke vii. 34). He was accused of being a sorcerer, and of having commerce with devils : *By the prince of devils, he casteth out devils* —(Matt. ix. 34). He was called a heretic, and one possessed by the devil : *Do we not say well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?*—(Jo. viii. 48). A deceiver : *For that seducer said*, etc.—(Matt. xxvii. 63). In fine, Jesus Christ was considered by all the people so wicked a man that there was no need of a tribunal to condemn Him to be crucified : *If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee*—(Jo. xviii. 30).

At last the Saviour came to the end of His life and to His Passion; and, O God, what contempt and ill-treatment did He not then receive! He was betrayed and sold by one of His own disciples for thirty pieces of money, a less price than would be given for a beast. By another disciple He was denied. He was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem bound like a thief, abandoned by all, even by His few remaining disciples. He was treated shamefully as a slave, when He was scourged. He was struck on the face in public. He was treated as a fool, when Herod had a white garment put on Him, that He might be thought a foolish person without any sense : "He despised Him as ignorant," says St. Bonaventure, "because He did not answer a word; as foolish, because He did not defend Himself." He was treated as a mock king when they put into His hand a reed instead of a sceptre, a tattered red garment upon His shoulders instead of the purple, and a wreath of thorns on His head for a crown. After thus deriding Him, they saluted Him : *Hail, King of the Jews!* and then they covered Him with spitting and blows : *and spitting upon him*—(Matt. xxvii. 30); *and they gave him blows*—(Jo. xix. 3).

Finally, Jesus Christ willed to die; but by what a

death! By the most ignominious death, the death of the Cross: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*—(Phil. ii. 8). Any one who suffered the death of the Cross at that time was considered the vilest and most wicked of criminals: *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*—(Gal. iii. 13). Therefore, the names of those who were crucified were always held as cursed and infamous; so that the Apostle wrote: *Christ is made a curse for us*—(Gal. iii. 13). St. Athanasius, commenting on this passage, says: "He is called a curse, because He bore the curse for us." Jesus took upon Himself this curse that He might save us from eternal malediction. But where, Lord, exclaims St. Thomas of Villanova, where is Thy beauty, where is Thy majesty in the midst of so much ignominy? And he answers: "Ask not; God has gone out of Himself." And the Saint's meaning was this: that we should not seek for glory and majesty in Jesus Christ, since He had come to give us an example of humility, and manifest the love that He bears towards men; and that this love had made Him, as it were, go out of Himself.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

1.

Let us return to speak for a little on the confidence we should have in Jesus Christ that He will grant us salvation. St. Augustine encourages us, saying that this Lord, Who has delivered us from death by shedding all His Blood, desires not that we should perish; and that if our sins separate us from God, and make us deserving of being rejected, our Saviour, on the other hand, cannot reject the price of the Blood He shed for us. Let us, then, boldly follow the counsel of St. Paul who says: *Let us run by patience to the fight proposed*

to us; looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame—(Heb. xii. 1). Let us run with patience the race before us, because it profits little to begin if we do not struggle on to the end; while patience in enduring labour will obtain for us the victory, and the crown that is promised to him who conquers.

This patience will be the shield which will defend us from the swords of our foes; but how shall we obtain it? "By looking," says the Apostle, "to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Faith." Who, says St. Augustine, despised all earthly goods that He might show that they are to be despised; Who endured all earthly evils which He taught us have to be endured, that in these we might neither seek the joys of the world, nor fear its persecution. Then with His glorious Resurrection Jesus Christ animated us not to fear death; because, if we are faithful to Him even until death, we shall obtain eternal life, be free from all evil, and enjoy every good. This is signified by the Apostle's words: *Jesus, the author and finisher of Faith;* for Jesus Christ is the Author of the Faith, in teaching us what to believe, and giving us grace to believe it; and so also He is the Finisher of Faith, by promising we shall one day enjoy that blessed life in which He teaches us to believe. And that we may be sure of the love this Saviour bears to us, and of the will He has that we should be saved, St. Paul adds: *Who having joy set before him endured the cross;* on which words St. John Chrysostom remarks that Jesus might have saved us by leading a life of joy upon earth; but that to make us more certain of the love He bore us, He chose a life of pain, and a death of shame, dying as a malefactor upon the Cross.

II.

O souls that love the Crucified, let us give ourselves to love this loving Redeemer, so worthy of love, and let us love Him to the utmost of our power. Let us also suffer for Him, because He has been willing to suffer for love

of us; and let us not cease to ask Him continually to grant us the gift of His holy love. Happy are we if we attain to a great love for Jesus Christ! The Venerable Father Vincent Carafa, an eminent servant of God, in a letter to some studious and devout young men, wrote as follows: "To reform ourselves and our whole life, we must give all our study to the exercise of Divine love. The love of God alone, when it enters a heart, and obtains possession of it, purifies it from all inordinate love, and makes it at once obedient and pure." St. Augustine says a pure heart is a heart emptied of every desire; and St. Bernard says that he who loves, loves, and desires nothing more; meaning that he who loves God desires nothing but to love Him, and banishes from his heart everything that is not God. And thus it is that, from being empty the heart becomes full, that is, full of God, Who with Himself brings every good thing; and then earthly pleasures, finding no place in such a heart, have no power over it. What power can earthly pleasures have over us if we enjoy Divine consolations? What power is there in ambition for vain honours, and the desire of earthly riches, if we have the honour of being loved by God, and begin to possess a share in the riches of Paradise? To measure, therefore, the advance we have made in the ways of God, let us observe what advance we have made in loving Him; whether we often during the day make acts of love towards God; often speak of the love of God; whether we take pains to inflame in others God's love; whether we perform our devotions solely to please God; whether we suffer with full resignation all adversities, infirmities, pains, poverty, slights, and persecutions in order to please God. The Saints say that love is as necessary for the life of a soul that truly loves God as breathing is for the life of the body, since the soul's very life both in time and eternity consists in the love of our sovereign Good, which is God.

Friday—Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation
(For the Twenty-Fifth of September).

"*LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS.*"

It is of Faith that Jesus Christ the true Son of God, for the love of men, humbled Himself so as to be born in a stable, and to lead a despised life, and in the end, to die by the hands of executioners on an infamous gibbet. Now, after all God has done and suffered for the love of man, will man refuse to humble himself for the love of God?

I.

It is of Faith that Jesus Christ the true Son of God, for the love of men, humbled Himself so as to be born in a stable, and to lead a despised life, and in the end, to die by the hands of executioners on an infamous gibbet. "O grace! O power of love!" exclaims St. Bernard, "didst Thou, O Most High, become the lowest of all!" O power of Divine love! The Greatest of all has made Himself the lowest of all! "Who did this?" asks the Saint. "It was love, regardless of dignity. Love triumphs over God." Love does not consider dignity when there is question of winning for itself the person it loves. God, who can never be conquered by any one, has been conquered by love; for it was love that compelled Him to make Himself man, and to sacrifice Himself for the love of man in an ocean of sorrows and contempt. "He emptied Himself," concludes St. Bernard, "that thou mayest know that it was through love that the Highest made Himself equal to thee." The Divine Word, Who is Majesty itself, humbled Himself

so far as to annihilate Himself, that mankind might know how much God loved men.

St. Bernard goes on to say, the more our God abased Himself, so much the more did He show forth His goodness and love : " The lower He showed Himself to be in His humanity, the greater did He declare Himself in goodness."

Now, after a God has done and suffered so much for the love of man, will man have a repugnance to humble himself for the love of God? *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*—(Phil. ii. 5). He who is not humble, and who does not seek to imitate the humility of Jesus Christ, is not worthy of the name of Christian; for Jesus Christ, as St. Augustine says, came into the world in an humble way to put down pride. The pride of man was the disease which drew from Heaven this Divine Physician, loaded Him with ignominies, and caused Him to die on the Cross. Let the proud man be ashamed then at least when he sees that a God so humbled Himself in order to cure him of pride : " Because of this very vice of pride, God came in humility. This disease drew Him down from Heaven, humbled Him even to the form of a servant, overwhelmed with calumnies, nailed Him upon the Cross. Blush, then, O man, to be proud, for whom God has become humble." And St. Peter Damian writes : " To raise us He lowered Himself." God chose to abase Himself that He might raise us out of the mire of our sins, and place us in the company of the Angels in Heaven : *Lifting up the poor out of the dunghill, that he may place him with princes, the princes of his people* —(Ps. cxii. 7). His abasement in our exaltation! Oh, the greatness of Divine love! exclaims St. Augustine. For the sake of man a God takes upon Himself contempt, that He may share His honour with man. He makes Himself familiar with grief and pain, that man may have salvation : He even suffers death, to obtain life for man. " O wondrous condescension! He comes to receive contempt that He may confer honours; He comes to be satiated with grief that He may give salva-

tion; He comes to undergo death, that He may bestow life."

By choosing for Himself so humble a birth, so lowly a life, and so ignominious a death, Jesus Christ ennobled and took away all bitterness from contempt and opprobrium. This is why the Saints were always so fond and even desirous of being despised. They seemed not to be able to desire or seek anything in this world but to be despised and trodden underfoot for the love of Jesus Christ. When the Divine Word came upon this earth, that Prophecy of Isaias was truly fulfilled : *In the dens where dragons dwelt before, shall rise up the verdure of the reed and the bulrush*—(Is. xxxv. 7)—that where the demons, the spirits of pride, dwelt, there, at the sight of the humility of Jesus Christ, should arise the spirit of humility. The reed signifies humility, says St. Ugo, commenting on this passage; the humble man is empty in his own eyes; the humble are not full of themselves, as the proud are, but empty of self, considering what is only the truth : that all they have is the gift of God.

From this we may well understand that an humble soul is as dear to God as the proud heart is odious in His eyes. But is it possible, says St. Bernard, for people to be proud after seeing the life of Jesus Christ? "Where the Divine Majesty annihilates itself a worm swells with pride!" Is it possible that a mere worm, loaded with sins, should be proud, when the God of infinite majesty and purity humbles himself so much to teach us to be humble!

Proud people are not acceptable with God. St. Augustine warns us : "Lift yourself up and God departs from you; humble yourself and God comes to you." The Lord flies from the proud, but, on the contrary, He cannot despise a heart that humbles itself, even though it should be a sinful one : *A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*—(Ps. l. 19). God has promised to hear all who pray to Him : *Ask, and it shall be given you . . . For every one that asketh receiveth*—(Matt. vii. 7). But He has declared that He will not

listen to the proud, as St. James tells us : *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*—(James iv. 6). He resists the prayers of the proud, and does not listen to them; but He cannot deny any grace to the humble, whatever they ask. In fact, St. Teresa says that the greatest graces she ever received were those which were granted her when she humbled herself most in the presence of God. The prayer of the humble penetrates into Heaven by its own efficacy, without needing any one to present it; and it does not depart without obtaining from God what it desires : *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold*—(Ecclus. xxxv. 21).

Spiritual Reading

"*ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD.*"

As soon as the soul shall have entered into the bliss of God, there will be nothing to afflict her more : *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes : and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow, shall be any more : for the former things are passed away. And he who sat on the throne said : Behold I make all things new*—(Apoc. xxi. 4, 5). In Heaven there is no more sickness, nor poverty, nor trouble : there are no more successions of day and night, nor of cold or heat. There is a perpetual day, always calm; a continual spring, ever teeming with delights. There are no more persecutions or jealousies : in that kingdom of love all love each other tenderly, and each rejoices in the happiness of the other as if it were his own. There are no more fears because the soul confirmed in grace can no more sin and lose her God : *Behold, I make all things new.* Everything is new, and every thing consoles and satisfies. *There is every thing that can please.* The sight shall be satisfied in gazing at that *city of perfect beauty*—(Lam

ii. 15). What delight would it be to behold a city, the streets of which were paved with crystal; the palaces of silver, with ceilings of gold, and all adorned with festoons of flowers! Oh, how much more beautiful will be the city of Paradise! What will it be to behold those citizens of Heaven all clad in royal robes! There, as St. Augustine says, all are kings: "As many citizens, so many kings." What to see Mary, who will appear more beautiful than the whole of Paradise! What to see the Divine Lamb, Jesus the Spouse! St. Teresa had once but a passing glimpse of the hand of Jesus Christ; and so great was its beauty that she remained, as it were, entranced. The sense of smelling shall be gratified by the odours of Paradise; the hearing with heavenly harmonies. St. Francis once heard from an Angel a single stroke of his viola, and he thought to die of pleasure. What will it be to hear all the Saints and Angels singing in choir the glories of God! *They shall praise thee for ever and ever*—(Ps. lxxxiii. 5). What to hear Mary praising God! The voice of Mary in Heaven, says St. Francis de Sales, shall be like that of a nightingale in the grove, which surpasses the song of every other bird. In a word, there will be found every delight that can possibly be desired.

But these delights which we have as yet considered are but amongst the least of Paradise. The Good which constitutes Heaven is the Sovereign Good, God Himself: "All that we look for is contained in one word, God," says St. Augustine. The reward which the Lord promises us is not only the beauties, the harmonies, and the other joys of that blessed city; the principal reward is God Himself, that is to see and love God face to face: *I am thy reward exceeding great*—(Gen. xv. 1). St. Augustine says that if God were to show His face to the damned, "hell would straightway be changed into a lovely Paradise." And he adds that if a soul which had departed this life were allowed to choose between seeing God and enduring the pains of hell or of not seeing Him and to be delivered from hell, "it would choose rather to see the Lord and to suffer the pains of hell."

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE

In this life we cannot comprehend the joy of seeing and loving God face to face; but we may form some idea of it from knowing, in the first place, that Divine love is so sweet that even in this life it has lifted from earth, not only the souls, but even the bodies of the Saints. St. Philip Neri was once lifted up into the air, together with the bench which he had grasped. St. Peter of Alcantara was also raised from the earth clinging to a tree, which was torn up by the roots. Moreover, we know that the holy Martyrs, through the sweetness of Divine love, rejoiced in the midst of their very torments. St. Vincent, while he was tortured, spoke in such a way, says St. Augustine, "that it seemed as if one Vincent suffered and another spoke." St. Lawrence, whilst on the gridiron, mocked at the tyrant and said: "Turn me, and eat." Yes, says St. Augustine, because Lawrence, inflamed with this fire of Divine love, did not feel the burning. Besides, what sweetness does a sinner experience, even in this world, in weeping over his sins! Whence St. Bernard says: "If it be so sweet to weep for Thee, what will it be to rejoice because of Thee!" What sweetness, too, does a soul feel to whom the goodness of God and the mercies bestowed on her by Jesus Christ, and the love He has borne and still bears her are disclosed by a ray of light in the time of prayer! The soul then feels as if she were dissolved, and fainting away through love. And yet on this earth we do not see God as He really is, we see Him but obscurely: *We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face*—(1 Cor. xiii. 12). At present we have, as it were, a bandage before the eyes: God is hidden under the veil of Faith, and does not disclose Himself to us. What will it be when the veil is taken away from our eyes and we behold God face to face! Then we shall see how beautiful is God, how great, how just, how perfect, how amiable, how loving!

Evening Meditation

CONFIDENCE IN JESUS CHRIST AND LOVE OF HIM.

Let us be persuaded we shall never attain to a great love for God, except through Jesus Christ, and unless we have a special devotion to His Passion, by which He procured Divine grace for us. The Apostle writes : *Through him we have access . . . to the Father*—(Eph. ii. 18). The way to grace would be closed to us sinners were it not for Jesus Christ. He opens the gate to us; He introduces us to the Father, and by the merits of His Passion obtains for us from the Father pardon for our sins, and all the graces we receive from God. Miserable we should be if we did not possess Jesus Christ. And who can ever sufficiently praise and thank the love and goodness this merciful Redeemer has shown to us poor sinners, in being willing to die to deliver us from eternal death? Scarcely, says the Apostle, will any die for a just man, but for a good man perhaps some would dare to die; but when we were sinners, Christ died for us—(Rom. v. 7-10).

Wherefore the Apostle teaches us that if we are resolved at all costs to seek the love of Jesus Christ we ought to expect from Him every help and favour; and he thus reasons : For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. He thus warns those who love Jesus Christ that they do injustice to the love which this our merciful Saviour bears us, if they fear He will deny them any of the graces necessary for salvation and sanctification. And that our sins may not cause us to fail in trusting Him, St. Paul goes on to say : *For not as the offence so also the gift. For if by the offence of one many died; much more the grace of God and the gift, by the grace of one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many*—(Rom. v. 15). He here gives

us to understand that the gift of grace obtained by the Redeemer through His Passion brings us blessings far greater than the loss we sustained by the sin of Adam; for the merits of Christ have a greater power to cause us to be loved by God than the sin of Adam had to make Him hate us. "We obtained," says St. Leo, "greater things by the unspeakable grace of Christ than we lost by the malice of the devil."

II.

Let us, then, conclude, O devout souls—let us love Jesus Christ! Let us love this Redeemer Who is so worthy of being loved, and has so loved us that it seems as if He could have done no more to gain our love. It is enough for us to know that, for love of us, He has been willing to die, consumed by grief upon a Cross; and, not satisfied with this, has left us Himself in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, where He gives us for food the very same Body He sacrificed for us, and gives us to drink the very same Blood He poured forth for us in His Passion. Most ungrateful shall we be to Him, then, not only if we offend Him, but if we love Him little, and do not consecrate to Him our entire love.

O my Jesus, may I be all consumed with love for Thee, as Thou wast all consumed for me! And since Thou hast so much loved me, and bound me to love Thee, help me now not to be ungrateful to Thee. Most ungrateful should I be if I loved anything apart from Thee. Thou hast loved me without reserve; without reserve I also wish to love Thee. I leave all, I renounce all, to give myself wholly to Thee, and to have in my heart no love but Thine. In pity, accept my love, without taking account of the offences that I have committed against Thee in the past. Behold, I am one of those sheep for whom Thou hast shed Thy Blood; we therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood. Forget, O my dear Saviour, the many offences I have committed against Thee. Chastise me as Thou wilt; deliver me only from the

punishment of not being able to love Thee, and then do with me whatever Thou wilt. Deprive me of everything, O my Jesus, but deprive me not of Thyself, my only Good. Teach me to know what Thou wilt have from me, that, by Thy grace, I may fulfil all Thy will. Make me forget everything that I may remember Thee alone, and all the pains Thou hast suffered for me. Grant that I may think of nothing but of pleasing Thee, and loving Thee. Look upon me with that love with which Thou didst look upon me on Calvary, when dying for me upon the Cross, and hear me. In Thee I place all my hopes, O my Jesus, my God, and my all.

O holy Virgin Mary, my Mother and my Hope, recommend me to thy Son, and obtain that I may be faithful to His love till the hour of my death. Amen.

Saturday—Seventeenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"THE NAME OF MARY A TOWER OF STRENGTH."

The invocation of the Sacred Names of Jesus and Mary, says Thomas à Kempis, is a short prayer, as sweet to the mind and as powerful to protect those who use it as it is easy to remember. Let us therefore take advantage of the beautiful advice given by St. Bernard : " In dangers, in perplexities, in doubtful cases, think of Mary, call on Mary; let her not leave thy lips; let her not depart from thy heart!"

I.

The Blessed Henry Suso, speaking of the sweetness of Mary's name, says that when he named Mary he felt himself so excited to confidence and inflamed with such love and joy, that between the tears and joy with which he pronounced the beloved name, he desired that his heart might leave his breast; for he declared that this most sweet name was like a honeycomb dissolving in the inmost recess of the soul; and then he would exclaim: "O most sweet name! O Mary, what must thou thyself be, since thy name alone is thus amiable and gracious!"

The enamoured St. Bernard, raising his heart to his good Mother, exclaims with tenderness: "O great! O pious! O thou who art worthy of all praise! O most holy Virgin Mary! Thy name is so sweet and amiable that it cannot be pronounced without inflaming those who do so with love for thee and for God. Thy name only need occur to the mind of thy lovers to move them to love thee more and to console them." "Thou canst not be named without inflaming; thou canst not be thought of by those who love thee without filling their minds with joy." "And if riches comfort the poor, because they relieve them in their distress," says Richard of St. Laurence, "oh, how much more does thy name, O Mary, comfort us than any earthly riches! It comforts us in all the hardships of this life." "Thy name, O Mary, is far better than riches, because it can better relieve poverty."

In fine, "thy name, O Mother of God, is filled with Divine graces and blessings," as St. Methodius says. So much so, that St. Bonaventure declares that "thy name, O Mary, cannot be pronounced without bringing some grace to him who does so devoutly." The Blessed Raymond Jordano says that "however hardened and diffident a heart may be, the name of this most Blessed Virgin has such efficacy, that if it is only pronounced, that heart will be wonderfully softened." I shall, however, give his own words: "The power of thy most holy name, O ever-blessed Virgin Mary, is such that it softens

the hardness of the human heart in a wonderful manner." He tells us that it is Mary who leads sinners to the hope of pardon and grace. "By thee does the sinner recover the hope of forgiveness and of grace."

Thy most sweet name, O Mary, according to St. Ambrose, "is a precious ointment, which breathes forth the odour of Divine grace." The Saint then prays to the Divine Mother, saying: "Let this ointment of salvation enter the inmost recesses of our souls." That is, grant, O Lady, that we may often remember to name thee with love and confidence; for this practice either tells of the possession of Divine grace, or else is a pledge that we shall soon recover it. "And truly it is so, O Mary; for the remembrance of thy name comforts the afflicted, recalls to the way of salvation those who have erred, and encourages sinners, that they may not abandon themselves to despair."—(Ludolph of Saxony).

II.

Father Pelbart says that "as Jesus Christ by His five Wounds gave a remedy for the evils of the world, so also does Mary, by her most holy name, which is composed of five letters, daily bring pardon to sinners."

For this reason is the holy name of Mary likened in the Sacred Canticles to oil: *Thy name is as oil poured out*—(Cant. i. 2). On these words Blessed Alan says that her glorious name is compared to oil poured out, because oil heals the sick, sends out a sweet odour, and nourishes flames. Thus also does the name of Mary heal sinners, rejoice hearts, and inflame them with Divine love. Hence Richard of St. Laurence encourages sinners to have recourse to this great name because it alone will suffice to cure them of all their evils; and there is no disorder, however malignant, that does not immediately yield to the power of the name of Mary.

On the other hand Thomas à Kempis affirms that the devils fear the Queen of Heaven to such a degree that only on hearing her great name pronounced they fly from him who does so as from a burning fire. The Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget that there

is not on earth a sinner, however devoid he may be of the love of God, from whom the devil is not obliged immediately to fly, if he invokes her holy name with a determination to repent. On another occasion she repeated the same thing to the Saint, saying that "all the devils venerate and fear this name to such a degree that on hearing it they immediately loosen the claws with which they hold the soul captive." Our Blessed Lady also told St. Bridget that in the same way as the rebel angels fly from sinners who invoke the name of Mary, so also do the good Angels approach nearer to just souls who pronounce her name with devotion.

St. Germanus declares that as breathing is a sign of life, so also is the frequent pronunciation of the name of Mary a sign either of the life of Divine grace, or that it will soon return; for this powerful name has it in the virtue of obtaining help and life for him who invokes it devoutly. Addressing the Blessed Virgin, he says: "As breathing is a sign of life in the body, so is the frequent repetition of thy most holy name, O Virgin, by thy servants, not only a sign of life and of strength, but also it procures and nourishes both."

Spiritual Reading

CONFRATERNITIES OF OUR BLESSED LADY.

The Sovereign Pontiffs have approved and highly commended Confraternities and also enriched them with many Indulgences. St. Francis de Sales, with great earnestness, exhorts all seculars to join them. What pains, moreover did not St. Charles Borromeo take to establish and multiply these Confraternities. In his Synods, he particularly recommends confessors to engage their penitents to join them. And with good reason; for these Sodalities, especially those of our Blessed Lady, are so many Noe's arks, in which poor seculars find a refuge from the deluge of temptations and sins which inundates the world. We, from the experience of our

Missions, well know the utility of these Confraternities. As a rule, a man who does not attend the meetings of a Confraternity commits more sins that twenty men who do attend them. A Confraternity can well be called *a tower of David; a thousand bucklers hang upon it—all the armour of valiant men*—(Cant. iv. 4). The reason that Confraternities do so much good is that in them the members acquire many weapons of defence against hell, and put in practice the requisite means of preservation in Divine grace, which are seldom made use of by seculars who are not members of these Confraternities.

1.—In the first place, one means of salvation is, to meditate on the eternal truths : *Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin*—(Ecclus. vii. 40). How many are lost because they neglect to do this ! *With desolation is all the land made desolate; because there is none that considereth in his heart*—(Jer. xii. 11). But those who frequent the meetings of their Confraternities are led to think of these truths by the many meditations, lectures, and sermons they there hear : *My sheep hear my voice* —(Jo. x. 27).

2.—To save one's soul prayer is necessary : *Ask, and you shall receive*—(Jo. xvi. 24); this the members of the Confraternities do constantly. God also hears their prayers the more readily; for He has Himself said that He grants graces more willingly to prayers offered up in common : *If two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father*—(Matt. xviii. 19) : on which St. Ambrose says that " many who are weak, when united become strong; and it is impossible that the prayers of so many should not be heard."

3.—In Confraternities the Sacraments are most likely to be frequented, both on account of the rules and the example given by the other members. And thus perseverance in grace is more easily obtained, the sacred Council of Trent having declared that Holy Communion is " an antidote whereby we may be freed from daily faults, and be preserved from mortal sins."

4.—Besides the frequentation of the Sacraments in

these Confraternities, many acts of mortification, humility, and charity towards the sick brethren and the poor, are performed. Well would it be if this holy custom of assisting the sick-poor of the place were introduced into all Confraternities.

5.—We have already said how profitable it is for our salvation to serve the Mother of God; and what else do the members do in the Confraternity but serve her? How much is she not praised there! How many prayers are not there offered to her! From the very beginning, the members are consecrated to her service; they choose her in an especial manner for their sovereign Lady and Mother; they are inscribed in the Register of Mary's children; hence, as they are her servants and children in an especial manner, in an especial manner are they treated by her, and she protects them in life and in death. So that a member of a Confraternity of Mary can say, *Now all good things came to me together with her* —(Wis. vii. 11).

Each member should therefore pay attention to two things: First of all, the object that he should have in view should be no other than to serve God and his Mother Mary and save his soul; secondly, not to allow worldly affairs to prevent his attendance at the meeting on the appointed days; for he has there to attend to the most important business that he has in the world, which is his eternal salvation. He should also endeavour to draw as many others as he can to join the Confraternity, and especially to bring back those members who have left it.

Oh, with what terrible chastisements has our Lord punished those who have abandoned the Confraternity of our Blessed Lady! There was a brother who did so in Naples; and when he was exhorted to return, he answered: "I will do so when my legs are broken and my head is cut off." He prophesied; for, a short time afterwards, some enemies of his broke his legs and cut off his head.

On the other hand, the members who persevere have both their temporal and spiritual wants provided for by

Mary. *All her domestics are clothed with double garments*—(Prov. xxxi. 21). Father Auriemma relates how many special graces Mary grants to members of the Confraternity, both in life and in death, but more particularly in death. Father Crasset gives an account of a young man, who, in the year 1586, was dying. He fell asleep; but afterwards waking he said to his confessor: O Father, I have been in great danger of damnation, but our Blessed Lady rescued me. The devils presented my sins before our Lord's tribunal, and they were already preparing to drag me to hell; but the Blessed Virgin came and said to them: "Whither are you taking this young man? What business have you with a servant of mine, who has served me so long in my Confraternity? The devils fled and thus was I delivered from their hands." The same author also relates that another brother had also, at the point of death, a great battle with hell; but at length, having conquered, filled with joy, he exclaimed: "Oh, what a blessing it is to serve the Holy Mother in her Confraternity!" and thus filled with consolation he expired. He then adds that in Naples, when the Duke of Popoli was dying, he said to his son: "Son, know that the little good that I have done in this life I attribute to my Confraternity. Hence I have no greater treasure to leave thee than the Confraternity of Mary. I now value more having been one of its members, than being Duke of Popoli."

Evening Meditation

"*THOU SHALT BE CROWNED.*"

I.

Your sorrow shall be turned into joy—(Jo. xvi. 20).

Let us during life animate ourselves by the hope of Heaven, to bear patiently the afflictions of this life, and to offer them to God in return for the sufferings Jesus

Christ endured for the love of us. All these afflictions, sorrows, persecutions and tears, will one day have an end and will, if we save our souls, become to us sources of happiness and joy in the Kingdom of bliss. This is the ground of courage and hope which the Saviour holds out to us. *Your sorrow shall be turned into joy*—(Jo. xvi. 20). The most enlightened of the Saints knew not how to give us an idea of the happiness God has prepared for His faithful servants. David could only break forth in joy, exclaiming : *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts*—(Ps. lxxxiii. 2). But, my beloved St. Paul, do you at least, who had the happiness of being rapt up into Heaven, declare to us some of the things you have seen. No, exclaims the Apostle, for what I have seen is impossible to describe. The delights of Heaven *are secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter*—(2 Cor. xii. 4). They are so great that they only who enjoy them are able to comprehend them. All that I can say, says the Apostle, is : *It is written, 'That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him'*—(1 Cor. ii. 9).

At present it is impossible for us to comprehend the happiness of Heaven, because we have no idea but of earthly enjoyments. Were a horse capable of reasoning he would, if he expected a rich feast from his master, imagine it to consist in excellent hay and oats ; for these are the only species of food of which he has any idea. It is thus we form our notions of the happiness of Heaven. It is beautiful in the summer to behold at night the glory of the starry heavens ; delightful to pass through a garden full of fruits and flowers, flowing fountains, and the singing of birds. In such a scene one is tempted to exclaim : Oh ! what a Paradise ! What a Paradise ! But far different are the delights of Heaven. To form some imperfect idea of them, reflect that in Heaven is an All-Powerful God Who has pledged Himself to make the soul that loves Him happy. Do you wish, says St. Bernard, to know what is in Heaven ? " There

is nothing there that gives displeasure; there is everything that delights."

O Jesus, my sweet Saviour, do not abandon me! My soul is immortal: I must then either love Thee or hate Thee for all eternity. Ah! it is my wish to love Thee for eternity, and I wish to love Thee without reserve here, that I may love Thee without reserve hereafter. Dispose of me as Thou pleasest; chastise me as Thou wishest; do not deprive me of Thy love, and then do with me what Thou wilt. My Jesus, Thy merits are my hope. O Mary, I place great confidence in thy intercession. Thou didst deliver me from hell when I was in sin; now that I wish to give myself to God, obtain for me the grace to save my soul, and to become a Saint.

II.

O God, what will be the sentiments of the soul on its entrance into that happy Kingdom? Let us represent to our minds a young virgin, who, after consecrating herself to the love of Jesus Christ, dies and quits this world. The soul is presented for Judgment: the Judge embraces her, and pronounces the sentence of her salvation. Her Angel-Guardian meets and congratulates her; she thanks him for his assistance, and the Angel then says: "Rejoice, O happy soul! thy salvation is now secure; come and behold the face of thy Lord." Behold, the soul now passes beyond the clouds, the spheres, the stars, and enters into Heaven. O God! what will be the feelings of that bride of Christ on first setting foot in this happy country, and beholding for the first time this city of delights! The Angels and the Saints will come to meet her, and will receive her with a joyous welcome. What shall be her consolation in rejoining there her relatives or friends who have been already admitted into Heaven, and in meeting her holy advocates!

The soul will wish to bend her knees to venerate these Saints, but they will say: *See thou do it not, for we are thy fellow-servants.* She will thence be carried to kiss the feet of Mary, the Queen of Heaven. What tender-

ness will not the soul experience in first beholding the Divine Mother who gave her so much assistance in the work of her salvation; for then the soul will see all the graces she obtained through the intercession of Mary, who will embrace her with love and tenderness. The Queen of Heaven will then conduct the soul to Jesus Who will receive her as His spouse, and say : *Come from Libanus, my spouse . . . thou shalt be crowned*—(Cant. iv. 8). My spouse, rejoice : there is now an end to tears, to sufferings and to fears; receive the eternal crown I have purchased for thee by My Blood. Jesus Himself will then present her to receive the benediction of His Divine Father Who will embrace and bless her, saying : *Enter thou into the joy of thy lord*—(Matt. xxv. 21), and will bestow upon her the same happiness He Himself enjoys.

Behold, O my God, at Thy feet an ungrateful sinner, whom thou hast created for Heaven, but who has so often, for the sake of a wretched pleasure, renounced Thee to Thy face, and has consented to be condemned to hell. But I hope Thou hast already pardoned me all the injuries I have done Thee, for which I am always sorry and will be sorry as long as I live. Of these injuries I desire to receive from Thee new pardon. But, O God, although my sins have been already forgiven, it will still be always true that I have dared to afflict Thee, my Redeemer, Who hast given Thy life to bring me to Thy Kingdom. But may Thy mercy be forever praised and blessed, my Jesus, for having borne me with so much patience, and for having bestowed upon me multiplied graces instead of chastising me as I deserved. I see, my dear Saviour, that Thou ardently desirest my salvation, and that Thou wishest to bring me to Thy Kingdom that I may love Thee for ever; but it is Thy wish that I should first love Thee here on earth. Yes; I wish to love Thee. Though there were no Heaven, I would wish to love Thee while I live, with my whole soul and with all my strength. It is enough for me to know that Thou, my God, desirest to be loved by me. My Jesus assist me by Thy grace.

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